



<div>  <div> Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS WEDNESDAY — 17 AUG 2022 </div>  </div>			
	International	National	Regional and Local
Events, Opportunities Go to articles	08/17 Day 175 of the Russia invasion 08/17 Ukraine clandestine resistance cells 08/17 Russia court fines popular rock star 08/17 Action wanes at UN to isolate Russia 08/17 Donetsk 'bilateral cooperation' with NKorea 08/17 Ukraine defies Russia, strikes Crimea again 08/17 Iran ready to swap prisoners 08/17 NKorea fires 2 cruise missiles 08/17 China warns US sailing Taiwan Strait 08/17 China, US spar over climate on Twitter 08/17 China troops to Russia for military drills 08/17 UK inflation tops 10%; gloomy for Europe 08/17 China longest, strongest heatwave record 08/17 Forest fires destroyed 23M acres land 2021 08/16 Sanctions devastate Russia economy 08/16 US to buy Ukraine grain; more shipments 08/16 Electronic warfare reshapes Ukraine war 08/16 Russia warns UK against spy plane flight 08/16 Crimea is a key place in Russia war effort 08/16 Ukraine create 'chaos within Russia forces' 08/16 Power struggle in Iraq intensifies 08/16 Revealed: secret powers of an Australia PM 08/16 Germany to keep 3 nuclear plants running? 08/16 Heat wave intensifies Europe energy crisis	08/17 NASA accidentally spies on Putin's war 08/17 Rush to sell ghost gun parts before ban 08/17 Syria denies holding US journalist Tice 08/17 When will price increases end? 08/17 Teachers get schooled in inflation 08/16 Climate, health bill signed into law 08/16 Colleges prepare for monkeypox threat 08/16 Boogaloo Bois head to Ukraine to fight 08/16 Somali-American youths rehab captivity 08/16 Military clamps down on racist speech 08/16 Suicide rates among Black youth rising 08/16 Court: transgender protected under ADA 08/16 Record number Asian Americans buy guns 08/16 Workers walkout: job unhappiness soars 08/16 Wind energy boom, golden eagles collide 08/16 Drought devastates cotton harvest 08/16 Northeast plunges into intense drought 08/16 States face more Colorado River water cuts 08/16 Recall: large GM SUVs	08/16 King Co. childcare workers \$500 bonus 08/16 Seattle approves police hiring incentives 08/16 Agencies fall short federal relief reporting 08/16 Homebuyers backing out of deal new high 08/16 Seattle Fire pander to contrived complaint? 08/16 Flood survivors 9mo. later still await FEMA 08/16 WA pays \$2M to assaulted hospital workers 08/16 Heat returns to Pacific Northwest 08/16 Fire danger mounts for WA counties 08/16 Firefighters uneasy about brush fire risk 08/16 Third La Nina winter headed for Seattle? 08/16 Seattle to host 2023 MLB All-Star Game
Cyber, Tech Awareness Go to articles	08/17 Ukraine foils ambitious Russia cyberattack 08/16 Exploit out for critical Realtek flaw 08/16 NKorea hackers targeting job seekers 08/16 Brazil federal police target Lapsus\$ Group 08/16 Saudis jail woman to 34yrs for using Twitter 08/16 Ransomware group extorts wrong company	08/17 Extremists fled to new wave of apps, sites 08/16 Signal discloses Twilio hack impact 08/16 Deadly swatting increasing on Twitch 08/16 Cryptocurrency crimes declines in 2022 08/16 Scammers sneaky trick bypass spam filters 08/16 Microsoft workers expose login credentials	08/16 Seattle PD links car thefts to TikTok videos
Terrorism, Extremism Go to articles	08/17 Belgian jihadism: thing of the past? 08/17 Jihadists spread: Sahel to West Africa coast	08/16 Taliban seized \$7B US-supplied weapons 08/16 Pakistani pleads guilty to terrorism charge	
Suspicious, Unusual Go to articles	08/17 Cities blight: nitrogen dioxide pollution	08/17 Lake Mead: 5th set human remains found 08/16 Atlantic hurricane seasons start earlier	08/17 'Rainbow fentanyl' seized in Portland
Crime, Criminals Go to articles	08/17 El Salvador gang crackdown tallies 50,000 08/17 Thailand restive south: arson, bombings 08/16 Mexico: 14th journalist slain this year	08/16 July border stunner: 2,071lbs fentanyl 08/16 Growing tide of threats against FBI, feds 08/16 Memphis hospital: 6 shot outside entrance 08/16 Feds bust Mafia gambling operations in NY 08/16 Judge tosses plea deals in spy couple case	08/16 Seattle Belltown neighborhood shooting 08/16 DSHS to pay \$250/day to murder suspect 08/16 HSI targets human trafficking in King Co. 08/16 Multi-state crime spree suspect gets life

[DISCLAIMER and FAIR USE Notice](#)

Events, Opportunities

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	08/17 China, US spar over climate on Twitter
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/biden-china-climate-and-environment-government-politics-629a6204fcef59875e511e3c2b69cda
GIST	BEIJING (AP) — The world's two biggest emitters of greenhouse gases are sparring on Twitter over climate policy, with China questioning whether the U.S. can deliver on the landmark climate legislation signed into law by President Joe Biden this week.

“You can bet America will meet our commitments,” U.S. Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns [tweeted in response](#) on Wednesday, using a national flag emoticon for “America.” He called on China to resume suspended climate talks, writing, “We’re ready.”

The punchy exchange, part of a longer back and forth on Twitter, is emblematic of a broader worry: [U.S.-China cooperation](#) is widely considered vital to the success of global efforts to curb rising temperatures. With the [breakdown in relations](#) over Taiwan and other issues, some question whether the two sides can cooperate.

After Congress passed the climate bill last Friday, Burns took to Twitter over the weekend to say the U.S. was acting on climate change with its largest investment ever — and that China should follow.

On Tuesday night, China’s Foreign Ministry responded with [its own tweet](#): “Good to hear. But what matters is: Can the U.S. deliver?”

The verbal skirmish grew out of China’s [suspension of talks](#) with the U.S. on climate and several other issues earlier this month as part of its protest over a [visit to Taiwan](#) by a senior American lawmaker, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Climate has been one of the few areas of cooperation between the feuding countries. U.S. officials criticized China’s move, with Secretary of State Antony Blinken saying it “doesn’t punish the United States — [it punishes the world](#).”

Asked to respond, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian called on the U.S. last week to “deliver on its historical responsibilities and due obligations on climate change and stop looking around for excuses for its inaction.”

The ministry later tweeted some of his answer, and Burns responded four days later with his tweet on the U.S. climate bill. Using the acronym for the People’s Republic of China, he ended with, “The PRC should follow+reconsider its suspension of climate cooperation with the U.S.”

China elaborated on its “Can the U.S. deliver?” message with a second tweet suggesting that the U.S. meet [rich country pledges](#) to help poorer countries cope financially with climate change and lift [sanctions imposed last year](#) on solar industry exports from China’s Xinjiang region because of allegations of forced labor.

The Twitter battle highlights a perception divide between the longstanding superpower that wants to lead and the rising power that no longer wants to feel bound to follow anyone else’s direction.

The decision by former President Donald Trump to pull the U.S. out of the Paris climate accord — [reversed by Biden](#) after he took office last year — dealt a blow to American credibility on the issue.

A Chinese expert praised parts of the U.S. legislation but said it is overdue and not enough.

“Although there are some breakthrough achievements in the bill, I am afraid it can’t reestablish U.S. leadership on climate change,” said Teng Fei, a professor at Tsinghua University’s Institute of Energy Environment and Economy.

U.S. climate envoy John Kerry has been pressing China to set more ambitious climate goals. China has responded that its goals are realistic, given its development needs as a middle-income country, while the U.S. sets ambitious goals that it fails to achieve.

China’s ruling Communist Party generally sets conservative targets at a national level because it doesn’t want its performance to fall short. Those targets are sometimes exceeded, though, in the eager pursuit of those goals by local officials.

	“China should be able to do better than its national targets indicate,” said Cory Combs, a senior analyst with the Trivium China consultancy. “But of course, those local plans are all subject to failure and delays, so it’s impossible to tell quite what they’ll add up to.”
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/17 Iran ready to swap prisoners
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-ready-swap-prisoners-calls-us-free-jailed-iranians-fars-2022-08-17/
GIST	<p>DUBAI, Aug 17 (Reuters) - Iran is ready to swap prisoners with the United States, its foreign ministry spokesman was quoted as saying on Wednesday, calling on President Joe Biden's administration to "act instead of performing theatrical shows".</p> <p>Tehran has sought the release of over a dozen Iranians in the United States, including seven Iranian-American dual nationals, two Iranians with permanent U.S. residency and four Iranian citizens with no legal status in the United States.</p> <p>"We are ready to swap prisoners with Washington ... The U.S. must release jailed Iranian citizens without any conditions," the semi-official Fars news agency quoted foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani as saying.</p> <p>On Tuesday, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken tweeted that Siamak Namazi had now spent 2,500 days "wrongfully detained" in Iran and Washington was determined to secure the freedom of all Americans held by its Middle East adversary.</p> <p>Kanaani spoke as Tehran and Washington sought to revive a 2015 nuclear pact after lengthy negotiations. The European Union and United States said on Tuesday they were studying Iran's response to what the EU has called its "final" proposal to save the deal, after Tehran called on Washington to show flexibility.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/17 Action wanes at UN to isolate Russia
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/action-wanes-un-isolate-russia-almost-six-months-into-ukraine-war-2022-08-17/
GIST	<p>UNITED NATIONS/GENEVA, Aug 17 (Reuters) - On a June night under the chandeliers of Russia's United Nations mission in New York, dozens of U.N. ambassadors from Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and Asia attended a reception to mark the country's national day - less than four months after its forces invaded neighboring Ukraine.</p> <p>"We thank all of you for your support and your principled position against the so-called anti-Russian crusade," Russian U.N. Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia told them, after accusing countries he did not name of trying to "cancel" Russia and its culture.</p> <p>The crowd of ambassadors illustrated the difficulties facing Western diplomats in trying to sustain international resolve to isolate Russia diplomatically after an initial flurry of U.N. denunciations for attacking Ukraine.</p> <p>Wary of frustration and concern among some countries that the war is consuming too much global attention nearly six months in with no prospect of the United Nations being able to end it, Western diplomats acknowledge they are limited in how they can significantly further target Russia beyond having meetings.</p> <p>"As the war has dragged on, it has become harder to find meaningful ways to penalize Russia," said Richard Gowan, U.N. director at the independent International Crisis Group.</p>

In some cases, Western countries are shying away from some specific moves, fearing tepid support, as rising vote abstentions have signaled a growing unwillingness to publicly oppose Moscow, diplomats and observers said.

The European Union mulled a plan in June to appoint a U.N. expert to investigate human rights violations in Russia, according to diplomats, but it shelved the idea over fears nearly half the 47-member U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva might oppose it.

"Countries are asking: 'Is it really so wise to be among those who beat down Russia?'," said Olaf Wientzek, director of the Geneva office of the German Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

COSTUMES AND CHOCOLATES

The Russian mission to the United Nations in Geneva said Western states "know all too well that it's impossible to isolate Russia since it's a global power."

Diplomatic isolation did not extend to a secret ballot in Geneva to decide the best "national dress" at a reception in June. A Russian diplomat won and video showed her being awarded a box of chocolates. Ukraine's delegation walked out.

As a veto power on the 15-member U.N. Security Council Russia can shield itself from substantial action like sanctions, but it has also campaigned to blunt support for Western diplomatic moves elsewhere.

Ahead of a vote by the 193-member U.N. General Assembly in April to suspend Russia from the Human Rights Council, Moscow warned countries that a yes vote or abstention would be viewed as "unfriendly" with consequences for their relations.

The U.S.-led move succeeded, garnering 93 votes in favor, 24 votes against and 58 abstentions.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, said Russia has been able to sway some countries with a "false narrative" that Western sanctions are to blame for a global food crisis stoked by Moscow's war, but argued that it had not translated into greater support for Russia.

"More than 17 African countries abstained for fear of Russian intimidation tactics against them. So we have to be conscious of that," she told the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations in July.

RED LINES

Within a week of the Feb. 24 invasion, nearly three-quarters of the General Assembly voted to reprimand Russia and demand it withdraw its troops. Three weeks later it again overwhelmingly denounced Russia for creating a "dire" humanitarian situation.

"Support will wane because the March resolutions represent a high water mark; and there is no appetite for further action unless red lines are crossed," a senior Asian diplomat said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Some diplomats have suggested such red lines could be a nuclear or chemical weapons attack, large-scale civilian deaths or annexation of Ukrainian territory.

Western states have had success in focusing on elections to U.N. bodies. For the first time since U.N. children's agency UNICEF was created in 1946, Russia failed to win re-election to the board in April and failed to hold seats at other bodies.

But at the World Health Organization in May some 30 states, half of them from Africa, did not show up for a vote on a Ukraine resolution, prompting some delegates in attendance to joke that they must be missing out on a party.

"Most puzzling to us is the idea that a conflict like this is in essence being encouraged to continue indefinitely," said a senior African diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity, citing Western weapons supplies to Ukraine and a lack of real talks to peacefully end the conflict.

Ukraine has appealed for Russia to be expelled from the United Nations. But making the unprecedented move requires a Security Council recommendation - that can be blocked by Russia - and then a General Assembly vote.

Another option could be to revoke the credentials of Russian President Vladimir Putin's representatives but that would need at least majority support of the General Assembly.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/17 Teachers get schooled in inflation
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/markets/us/pricey-pencils-paper-us-teachers-get-schooled-inflation-2022-08-17/
GIST	<p>NEW YORK, Aug 17 (Reuters) - Teachers face a harsh lesson as inflation drives up the cost of everything from paper to pencils before the school year begins, leading some to cut back on supplies - or substitute with cheaper items.</p> <p>"If you ask any teacher, Ticonderoga pencils are it," said Kristina Eisenhower, 35, an instructional facilitator. Yet a 12-pack of that popular brand costs \$3.99, up nearly 25% from a year ago, on Amazon.com Inc (AMZN.O).</p> <p>In parts of Arkansas, where Eisenhower works, teachers' annual \$500 stipend for classroom materials has not increased in 15 years. "They're buying cheaper pencils, cheaper supplies, which in reality are not going to last as long as the name-brand supplies they've bought in the past," she said.</p> <p>Folders and binders cost 17% more than a year ago, according to data from analytics firm NielsenIQ. Prices are up 23% for graph paper, 8% for scissors, and 28% for book covers.</p> <p>Some teachers have formed groups to buy supplies in bulk from retailers like The Dollar Tree Inc (DLTR.O) and Walmart Inc (WMT.N).</p> <p>"Educators are going to try to stretch each dollar and they're probably going to dip into more of their personal funds to ensure kids have what they need," said Colin Sharkey, executive director of the Association of American Educators.</p> <p>A National Retail Federation survey in July found 47% of consumers were switching to cheaper options for school supplies due to higher prices.</p> <p>Some teachers create Amazon wish lists for classroom supplies, which they may share on social media for readers to buy and donate the items. Such lists posted on Twitter include disinfectant wipes, power strips, classroom decorations, snacks, dry erase markers and highlighters.</p> <p>FEWER DONATIONS TO 'WISH LISTS'</p> <p>Kindergarten teacher Melissa Hunt, 53, from Albany, New York, has noticed higher prices and fewer donations to her Amazon.com Educator Wish List.</p> <p>Last year she cleared her list in three days, but this year it has remained online for weeks and prompted a donation of only \$12, she said.</p> <p>A letter by a school district seen by Reuters told teachers to "refrain" from posting wish lists on social media, without providing a reason. Similar letters have been issued by other districts, said an educator on condition of anonymity.</p>

	<p>Atlanta-based Chaneè Jackson-Kendall, 35, is unhappy about picking up the slack, having to buy items for her second grader that she believes should be supplied by the school.</p> <p>This year she has spent around \$300 on clothes, \$300 on shoes, \$180 on school supplies, \$40 on face masks, \$45 on a water bottle and \$20 on a lunch box.</p> <p>"We're giving billions of dollars to Ukraine but we're having to buy copy paper for our schools," Jackson-Kendall said.</p> <p>On average, parents in the United States will spend \$661 on back-to-school shopping, 8% more than last year, according to Deloitte. Thirty-three of survey respondents said their personal financial situation has worsened since 2021.</p> <p>Sarah Fleming, who chairs Glowing Hearts Charity in Canada, said the program took in fewer donations this summer than a year earlier and that she has been forced to buy lower quality supplies.</p> <p>"When we did our ordering this year, we were told that if we waited much longer then prices were going to go up also," Fleming said. "So, I wonder, will we be able to continue to provide for that many students next year?"</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/17 China troops to Russia for military drills
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinese-military-will-send-troops-russia-joint-exercise-2022-08-17/
GIST	<p>BEIJING, Aug 17 (Reuters) - Chinese troops will travel to Russia to take part in joint military exercises led by the host and including India, Belarus, Mongolia, Tajikistan and other countries, China's defence ministry said on Wednesday.</p> <p>China's participation in the joint exercises was "unrelated to the current international and regional situation", the ministry said in a statement.</p> <p>Last month, Moscow announced plans to hold "Vostok" (East) exercises from Aug. 30 to Sept. 5, even as it wages a costly war in Ukraine. It said at the time that some foreign forces would participate, without naming them. read more</p> <p>Its last such exercises took place in 2018, when China took part for the first time.</p> <p>China's defence ministry said its participation in the exercises was part of an ongoing bilateral annual cooperation agreement with Russia.</p> <p>"The aim is to deepen practical and friendly cooperation with the armies of participating countries, enhance the level of strategic collaboration among the participating parties, and strengthen the ability to respond to various security threats," the statement said.</p> <p>Under Chinese President Xi Jinping and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, Beijing and Moscow have grown increasingly close.</p> <p>Shortly before Russia's Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine, Beijing and Moscow announced a "no limits" partnership, although U.S. officials say they have not seen China evade U.S.-led sanctions on Russia or provide it with military equipment.</p> <p>Russia's eastern military district includes part of Siberia and has its headquarters in Khabarovsk, near the Chinese border.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/17 Syria denies holding US journalist Tice
-----------------	--

SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/biden-middle-east-syria-journalists-bashar-assad-f7e100380b1bc75c3c895858db9edbc5
GIST	<p>DAMASCUS, Syria (AP) — Syria denied on Wednesday it is holding U.S. journalist Austin Tice or other Americans after President Joe Biden accused the Syrian government of detaining him.</p> <p>The Syrian Foreign Ministry said in a statement that Damascus “denies it had kidnapped or is holding any American citizen on its territories.”</p> <p>“The U.S. issued last week misleading and illogical statements by the American president and secretary of state that included baseless accusations against Syria that it had kidnapped or detained American citizens including former U.S. Marine Austin Tice,” the statement said.</p> <p>Biden’s comments last week came in a statement released by the White House to mark the 10th anniversary of Tice’s abduction, which took place when he was in Syria covering its lengthy conflict. Biden’s remarks were the clearest indication so far that the U.S. is certain Tice is being held by the government of President Bashar Assad.</p> <p>“We know with certainty that he has been held by the Government of Syria,” Biden said in his statement last week. “We have repeatedly asked the government of Syria to work with us so that we can bring Austin home.”</p> <p>State Department Spokesman Ned Price told reporters on Tuesday that the U.S. government has pushed Syria to return every American. On Tice’s case specifically, he said, the Biden administration has “engaged extensively – and that includes directly – with Syrian officials and through third parties.”</p> <p>“Syria has never acknowledged holding him,” Price said of Tice, adding that “we are not going to be deterred in our efforts. We are going to pursue every avenue for securing Austin’s safe return.”</p> <p>The Syrian Foreign Ministry denied in its statement having any secret contacts with U.S. officials on the missing Americans, adding that “any official dialogue with the American government will only be public based on the respect of Syria’s sovereignty.”</p> <p>In May, top Lebanese security official Maj. Gen. Abbas Ibrahim met with U.S. officials in Washington as part of mediation efforts between the U.S. and Syria for Tice’s release. Ibrahim, the chief of Lebanon’s General Security Directorate, has mediated complicated hostage releases in the past.</p> <p>In May, Biden met Tice’s parents and reiterated his commitment to working toward “Austin’s long overdue return to his family.”</p> <p>In the final months of the Trump administration, two U.S. officials — including the government’s top hostage negotiator, Roger Carstens, a former Army Special Forces officer — made a secret visit to Damascus to seek information on Tice and other Americans who have disappeared in Syria. It was the highest-level talks in years between the U.S. and Assad’s government, though Syrian officials offered no meaningful information on Tice.</p> <p>Tice went missing shortly after his 31st birthday on Aug. 14, 2012 at a checkpoint in a contested area west of the capital of Damascus. A video released a month later showed him blindfolded and held by armed men, saying, “Oh, Jesus.” He has not been heard from since.</p> <p>Tice is one of two Americans who went missing in Syria. The other is Majd Kamalmaz, a psychologist from Virginia, who vanished in Syria in 2017.</p> <p>Tice is from Houston and his work had been published by The Washington Post, McClatchy newspapers and other outlets. He went to Syria to cover the conflict that started in 2011. The war has left hundreds of thousands dead and displaced nearly half of the pre-conflict population of 23 million. More than 5 million of those are outside the country.</p>

HEADLINE	08/17 China warns US sailing Taiwan Strait
SOURCE	https://time.com/6206686/china-us-navy-warships-taiwan-strait/
GIST	<p>China called on the U.S. to refrain from sailing naval vessels through the Taiwan Strait, saying Beijing would take further action in the wake of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taipei.</p> <p>China's ambassador to Washington, Qin Gang, said Tuesday that China viewed such Taiwan transits as an escalation by the U.S. and an effort to support the "separatist" government in Taipei. He delivered the warning after Senator Edward Markey, a Massachusetts Democrat, wrapped up the second trip to the island in less than two weeks by a U.S. congressional delegation.</p> <p>"The US side has done too much and going too far in this region," Qin said in response to a question about potential naval patrols. "I do call on our American colleagues to refrain, to exercise restraint, not to do anything to escalate the tension. So if there's any moves damaging China's territorial integrity and sovereignty, so China will respond. China will respond."</p> <p>The Biden administration has said it would conduct air and maritime transits through the Taiwan Strait after China responded to Pelosi's trip with a series of military drills around the island, including likely firing ballistic missiles over Taipei. The U.S. has long held that such transits, like congressional visits, are consistent with its "one China" policy not to formally recognize the democratically elected government in Taipei.</p> <p>The Navy has conducted an average of about nine trips annually through the strait over the past decade, according to data compiled by Bloomberg, far fewer than the "100 navigations" Qin said the U.S. makes each year. The most recent known trip came July 19, when the destroyer, the USS Benfold, sailed through the waterway.</p> <p>Similarly, Pelosi was only the most senior of 149 members of Congress who have visited Taiwan over the past 10 years.</p> <p>The Biden administration shouldn't underestimate China's resolve on the issue of U.S. congressional visits to Taiwan, Qin said, rejecting White House arguments that lawmakers could act independently. He added that such trips violate the agreements underpinning US-China relations.</p> <p>"Congress is part of the government of the U.S.— it's not an independent, uncontrollable branch," Qin said. "Congress is obliged to abide by the foreign policy of the United States. That's why we feel very frustrated and dissatisfied with Senator Markey's visit to Taiwan. It's provocative, it's unhelpful."</p> <p>Separately, a bipartisan group of Japanese lawmakers plan to visit Taiwan next week, Kyodo News reported Tuesday, citing people familiar with the matter. The Defense Ministry in Tokyo had previously said that Chinese ballistic missiles landed in what Japan considers its exclusive economic zone after Pelosi's trip.</p> <p>Qin defended the Chinese military's response to the trip, saying the drills were "open, transparent and professional."</p> <p>"We are handling a serious fallout from Pelosi's visit," Qin told reporters in Washington. He warned the US not to "underestimate the strong resolve, determination and the capability of the Chinese government and the people to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity."</p> <p>Qin also downplayed the threat of an imminent Chinese attack on Taiwan, saying he wasn't aware of a specific timeline.</p> <p>"People are over-nervous about it," he said, adding that speculation China had moved up the timeline for an invasion was "baseless."</p>

HEADLINE	08/17 When will price increases end?
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/17/economy/inflation-markets-economy/index.html
GIST	<p>New York (CNN Business)A dollar just isn't worth what it used to be.</p> <p>At the grocery store, you're getting about 11 cents less than you did just a year ago. That dollar covers 15 cents less on utility bills and it's worth six cents less on your rent and housing costs. That adds up to a pretty decent chunk of change.</p> <p>It also explains why, as prices go up across the board, inflation is now a top concern for Americans.</p> <p>The rate of inflation is nearly as high as it was in the early 1980s. According to the latest report July from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, it was 8.5% but would have been even higher if not for falling gas prices.</p> <p>So when will price increases end? The answer is probably never. But that's not a bad thing, as long as the increases aren't too high.</p> <p>It's not just the US facing that problem. In almost every advanced economy in the world, the average annual rate of inflation in the first quarter of this year was at least twice what it was last year.</p> <p>People all around the globe are facing tough decisions about how to stretch their paychecks. Wages and salaries declined 3.5% over the past year, after adjusting for rising prices.</p> <p>Why some inflation is good</p> <p>Inflation doesn't end, it just gets less bad. And, in fact, we don't want it to end entirely.</p> <p>The Federal Reserve, the US central bank tasked with lowering the rate of inflation through a series of interest rate hikes, is aiming for a target of around 2%. That means that prices will still rise, just not nearly as much.</p> <p>When people say inflation is easing, they don't mean that groceries are getting cheaper. They mean that they're not going up as much each month. It's very rare to enter a deflationary period, and the government likes to avoid it if possible as it usually indicates that the economy is cooling way too rapidly.</p> <p>So yes, inflation will continue on for a very long time, but you won't notice it as much. Between the start of 1991 and the end of 2019, year-over-year inflation averaged about 2.3% a month. Those are ideal increases, the kind that cost of living raises can keep up with, the kind of "in my day a soda only cost a nickel" increases that become obvious only over long swaths of time.</p> <p>That doesn't mean some prices won't come down, of course. The price of gas, for example, has fallen significantly over the past two months. Food prices could also fall. Food and gas prices are more volatile than other expenses because they're impacted by outside factors like supply chain issues and Russia's war on Ukraine. The Federal Reserve can't do much to control them, and they tend to swing in both directions.</p> <p>But for the most part, prices of goods will remain higher, and consumers won't feel relief until their wages catch up to the new prices. Over the last four decades, there hasn't been any deflation in core goods, which exclude food and energy, said Nick Roussanov, a professor at Wharton finance. Durable goods and services, like cars, appliances and education, rarely come down in price.</p> <p>The Fed is now trying to shorten the length of time it takes for wages to catch up to these new prices. The longer it takes for that to occur, the more likely it is that Americans dip into their savings or take on credit card debt. It's already happening: Over the past year, credit card debt has jumped by \$100 billion, or 13%, the biggest percentage increase in more than 20 years.</p> <p>The reason for optimism</p>

Inflation won't continue at the current pace forever. Most economists predict that it will come down to that target rate of 2% by 2024.

So yes, things will continue to be painful, but they won't be anything like the *bring-a-wheelbarrow-of-money-to-purchase-a-loaf-of-bread* inflation crises we [learned about in history class](#). No one is worried about hyperinflation, at least not in the United States.

That's not to say that high inflation won't stick around for a while.

Some economists think that inflation could remain at a slightly elevated at 3% to 4% for decades. Boomers are retiring, and birth rates are decreasing. That's squeezing the labor force, says [former UK central banker Charles Goodhart](#), and we're entering an era full of worker shortages, which means elevated prices. Central bankers are paying attention to the theory. Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco President Mary Daly has said immigration restrictions might need to be reexamined in order to fix the problem.

There have been long periods of elevated inflation in the US before: In the 1970s the US economy suffered three recessions during which the underlying inflation problem never went away. But monetary policy has shifted since then. In that same decade, central banks had multiple objectives: high output and employment and price stability. Today, the Fed tends to prioritize price stability over those other mandates. That means Fed Chair Jerome Powell has a mandate to increase interest rates until inflation falls, even if the economy falls along with it.

A global crisis

The US is likely safe from hyperinflation: To be sure, prices are elevated, but not unprecedentedly so and they eased last month.

Still, other countries are suffering. Inflation in Argentina is sitting at a [20-year high of over 70%](#), and the country's central bank has raised its main rate of interest to 69.5% as it tries to contain soaring prices. Turkey's annual [rate of inflation](#), meanwhile, hit almost 80% in June — its highest level in about two decades.

Long-term elevated prices tend to [plunge some countries into periods of instability](#), which in turn raise food and gas prices globally. They also impact developing nations more severely and, according to a UN report, could [upend the progress](#) made over the past decade to fight climate change.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/17 Forest fires destroyed 23M acres land 2021
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/forest-fires-destroyed-23-million-acres-land-2021/story?id=88400813
GIST	<p>The planet continues to experience a massive loss in forest land as the world warms and allows severe wildfires to run rampant in regions spanning the globe.</p> <p>Overall, forest fires are getting worse worldwide, according to a new report released Wednesday by Global Forest Watch, a forest monitoring platform led by the World Resources Institute. The data captures stand-replacing fires, which kill all or most of the living overstory trees in a forest, and includes wildfires, escaped fires from human activities such as agriculture and hunting and intentionally set fires that result in tree cover loss.</p> <p>Tree cover loss due to fires is now twice as high as it was in 2001, with forest fires destroying about 7.4 million more acres of land -- an area roughly the size of Belgium -- last year compared to the turn of the century, according to the researchers, who analyzed two decades of fire data from the Global Land Analysis and Discovery Lab at the University of Maryland.</p> <p>Forest fires also accounted for more than 25% of all tree cover loss in that past 20 years, with 2021 ranking as the second-worst fire season on record due to unprecedented damage to boreal forests in the Northern Hemisphere, according to the report.</p>

About 70% of all fire-related tree cover loss over the past 20 years has occurred in those boreal forests, likely due to warming temperatures in northern, high-latitude regions, the researchers said.

Nearly 23 million acres of land -- an area the size of Thailand or roughly 16 soccer pitches per minute -- were scorched globally last year, according to the report. The rate of tree cover loss due to fire is increasing by about 568,000 acres -- roughly 4% -- every year.

In tropical forests, which are moist and wet environments, stand-replacing fires were historically rare events. However, fire loss in the tropics is increasing about 5% per year, which is an annual increase of about 89,000 acres, the experts said. Almost all fires that occur in the tropics are started by people, such as escaped fires from agriculture and land cleaning.

The top five countries that experienced tree cover loss over the past 20 years were Russia, at 131 million acres; Canada, at 66.7 million acres; the U.S., at 29.7 million acres; Brazil, at 23.5 million acres; and Australia, at 15.6 million acres. Extreme weather caused a significant spike in [bush fire activity](#) in Australia from 2019 to 2020.

Climate change is likely the major driver of increasing fire activity, the researchers said. A "climate feedback loop" has occurred in which rising temperatures create drier conditions, causing more forest area to burn, which then release even more carbon into the atmosphere.

The obliteration of forests could further hinder efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate global warming.

Forests are critical to Earth's ecology for their ability to capture and store carbon out of the atmosphere, alter the air quality and quantity of drinking water and provide habitat for the world's land species.

But longer fire seasons and an increase in fire frequency could turn some forests into a net source of carbon emissions, releasing more carbon than they are absorbing, which poses a long-term threat to countries' ability to uphold commitments under the Paris Agreement, which aims to limit global temperature rise to less than 2 degrees Celsius since the Industrial Revolution.

The cause of increasing forest fires are complex and vary significantly by geography, the researchers said, adding that there is no "silver bullet" to reversing the trend of increasing tree cover loss due to fires.

In addition, there is no solution to bring fire activity back down from historic levels without drastically reducing greenhouse gas emissions and breaking the fire-climate feedback loop, according to the analysis. Human activity in and around forests is also making them more susceptible to wildfires, especially in the tropics.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/17 China longest, strongest heatwave record
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/17/asia/china-heat-drought-climate-yangtze-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>Hong Kong (CNN)Chinese planes are firing rods into the sky to bring more rainfall to its crucial Yangtze River, which has dried up in parts, as swaths of the nation fall into drought and grapple with the worst heat wave on record.</p> <p>Several regions on the Yangtze have launched weather modification programs, but with cloud cover too thin, operations in some drought-ravaged parts of the river's basin have remained on standby.</p> <p>The Ministry of Water Resources said in a notice on Wednesday that drought throughout the Yangtze river basin was "adversely affecting drinking water security of rural people and livestock, and the growth of crops."</p>

On Wednesday, central China's Hubei province became the latest to announce it would seed clouds, using silver iodide rods to induce rainfall.

At least 4.2 million people in Hubei have been affected by a severe drought since June, Hubei's Provincial Emergency Management Department said Tuesday. More than 150,000 people there have difficulties accessing drinking water, and nearly 400,000 hectares of crops have been damaged because of high temperatures and drought.

The Yangtze is just one of many rivers and lakes [across the northern hemisphere that are drying up](#) and shrinking amid relentless heat and low rainfall, including Lake Mead in the US and the Rhine River in Germany. These extreme weather conditions have been supercharged by the human-induced climate crisis, driven by burning fossil fuels.

Communities often rely on these bodies of water for economic activity and governments are having to intervene with adaptation measures and relief funds, costing huge amounts of money.

China is deploying such funds and developing new supply sources to deal with the impacts on crops and livestock. Some livestock has been temporarily relocated to other regions, the Ministry of Finance said earlier this week, adding it would issue 300 million yuan (\$44.30 million) in disaster relief.

To boost downstream supplies, the Three Gorges Dam, China's biggest hydropower project, will also increase water discharges by 500 million cubic meters over the next 10 days, the Ministry of Water Resources said Tuesday.

The heat also forced authorities in the southwestern province of Sichuan -- home to around 84 million people and a key manufacturing hub -- to order the shutdown of all factories for six days this week to ease a power shortage.

'Longest' and 'strongest' heat wave on record

China issued its highest red alert heat warning for at least 138 cities and counties across the country on Wednesday, and another 373 were placed under the second-highest orange alert, the Meteorological Administration said.

As of Monday, China's heat wave had lasted 64 days, making it the longest in more than six decades, since full records began in 1961, the National Climate Center said in a statement. It also said it was the "strongest" on record and warned that it could worsen in the coming days.

"The heat wave this time is prolonged, wide in scope, and strong in extremity," the statement read. "Taken all signs together, the heat wave in China will continue and its intensity will increase."

The heat wave has also registered the largest number of counties and cities exceeding 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) since records began, according to the statement. The number of weather stations recording temperatures of 40C and above has reached 262, also the highest. Eight have hit 44C.

Persistently high temperatures are forecast to continue in the Sichuan Basin and large parts of central China until August 26.

A "special case" of high pressure from the West Pacific subtropical high, stretching across much of Asia, is likely to be the cause of the extreme heat, said Cai Wenju, climate researcher with CSIRO, Australia's national scientific research institute.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/17 Rush to sell ghost gun parts before ban
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ghost-guns-new-rule/

With just days remaining until new federal rules will effectively ban so-called [ghost guns](#) on Aug. 24, many companies are scrambling to sell parts needed to make the largely untraceable firearms — and gun enthusiasts continue to build them.

In April, President Joe Biden [announced new regulations](#) that will treat ghost guns — which can be made from parts bought online or with 3D printers — like any other firearms sold in the U.S.

Typical firearms must include a serial number that lets law enforcement trace them if they're used in a crime, but ghost guns don't have serial numbers. Also, anyone can buy ghost gun parts online without a background check, allowing criminals to bypass restrictions designed to prevent them from purchasing a traditional firearm from a licensed dealer.

Online, many websites that sell ghost gun parts have posted countdowns to the date the rule takes effect and have posted information for enthusiasts who want to continue building firearms at home.

The sites include companies like 80-lower.com, which urges visitors to "grab your freedom while you can" and links to product listings of AR-15 receivers. A similar site, 80percentarms.com, promises to continue shipping ghost gun parts until the day the rule begins. Representatives from 80-lower.com and 80percentarms.com didn't respond to CBS News' request for comment.

The number of ghost guns in the U.S. has been on the rise in recent years. While there's no data on how many ghost gun parts are sold, the number turning up at crime scenes in recent years has soared, according to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), which regulates firearms.

In its latest report on the U.S. gun market, the ATF pointed to jumps in Google trends data in recent years that suggest increasing interest in ghost gun parts.

That data shows key searches related to specific ghost gun parts soared by more than 600 percent in the last decade.

The ATF report also said ghost guns are making it possible "to make a firearm at home without any records or a background check."

Bob and Hugh are two of the people doing just that. They asked CBS News to only use their first names because they fear backlash.

In their garage in California's Central Valley, they make functioning AR-15-style rifles out of what appear to be gun parts but, under current federal law, are just pieces of metal.

Once assembled, guns like the ones Bob and Hugh make are essentially identical to those sold in stores, with one key difference: privately made firearms don't have serial numbers.

Bob and Hugh started putting serial numbers on all the guns they made in 2018, when California began requiring ghost guns to have serial numbers. It's one of only a handful of states that regulate ghost guns at all.

Rules like California's will soon extend to every state once the new ATF regulations take effect. That doesn't mean privately manufactured firearms will be illegal, but rather that ghost guns will have to be serialized, meaning they must contain a serial number. The regulations will also require anyone who buys the parts to submit to a background check.

Bob said he's concerned the new rules will dissuade law-abiding citizens from making guns like he does. He also said he fears criminals simply won't comply, but rather continue to make unserialized guns illegally.

"The laws are going to discourage a lot of people like me who like to make sure everything is above board," he said. "They're going to be discouraging people from going out and participating in this hobby."

Activists and federal officials hope these new regulations will help curtail the use of ghost guns in violent crime.

David Pucino, the Deputy Chief Counsel at Giffords Law Center, which advocates for stricter gun control laws, said it's "a strong rule" that will make it harder for criminals to build ghost guns while allowing hobbyists like Bob and Hugh to continue to do so.

"For the end user, if you're a responsible gun owner who wants to make their own weapons, you're not going to have any effect - no change, really," Pucino said. "It's just going to make it the same process you'd go through to buy a finished gun. However, if you're a criminal actor, somebody who's trying to skirt those laws, you're not going to be able to anymore because you're not going to be able to get sourcing for the parts used to make these ghost guns."

Ghost guns have presented an increasing problem for law enforcement in recent years. Nearly all ghost guns recovered at crime scenes — more than 99% — can't be traced at all, according to the ATF. At the same time, the number of ghost guns used in crimes has risen sharply — jumping 1,000% since 2016, though they still make up just 3% of all guns recovered by police.

Charlie Patterson, the Special Agent in Charge of the ATF's Washington Field Division, called the trend "very troubling."

"Right here in [Washington, D.C.], 41% of all privately made firearms that are recovered link to another shooting."

Patterson said he's confident the new rules will make a difference.

"I think that any tool that law enforcement has that can disrupt firearms trafficking and prevent one life from being lost to gun violence will make a difference," he said.

The key for the new rules to be truly effective, Pucino said, is "implementation."

"What we're going to need is for ATF to be really careful about implementing the rule," Pucino said. "To make sure that folks who are selling weapons by another name, that are selling the parts ... that can be used to make guns are regulated as if they're selling weapons. And if ATF does that, I think the rule will be very effective."

But gun owners and advocates like Bob and Hugh maintain their belief that the new rules aren't the way to reduce crime.

"It's not going to work," Hugh said. "Because it's the same thing. Criminals don't obey the law."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Workers walkout: job unhappiness soars
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/amazon-walkout-nurse-strike-gallup-employee-satisfaction/
GIST	<p>Workers from California to New York are demanding higher wages and better working conditions. Employees from coffee shops to hospitals have been staging walkouts and going on strike.</p> <p>It all comes amid a new Gallup poll that found half of workers are stressed, and one in five battles anger or sadness during the day.</p> <p>More than 150 Amazon workers walked off the job at an air freight facility in San Bernardino, California, on Monday, calling for a \$5 raise and safer working conditions.</p>

More than 2,000 Kaiser Permanente mental health care workers in California are now on strike, saying they are stretched thin from the workload. In Minnesota, nearly 15,000 nurses authorized a strike Monday.

"We've been to hell and back," said Brianna Hnath, a nurse at North Memorial Health Hospital in Minnesota. "We will not stop fighting until we are given a good and fair contract."

Kaiser Permanente says the company has been negotiating with the union for more than a year.

Dissatisfied and disengaged workers cost the global economy \$7.8 trillion in lost productivity, according to the Gallup state of the global workplace report. This summer, there were 415,000 fewer workers in the U.S. workforce than last summer, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

"They need to look at how to retain workers. It's not just getting workers in the door," said AnnElizabeth Konkell, an economist for the jobs website Indeed, when asked what the message is to companies moving forward.

Sara Fry, a mom of two in Minnesota, is getting called back to her AT&T office in September after working remotely during the pandemic.

"I'm like a lot of folks and there's a panic setting in," she said. "Some persons have actually said they're literally weeping every day, thinking about how they have to change up their day."

With nearly two job openings for each unemployed person, workers are in the driver's seat. If employees don't get what they want, they may consider a job switch and look elsewhere.

In a statement, an Amazon spokesperson told CBS News on Tuesday that it offers full-time employees a starting wage of at least \$17 per hour at its San Bernardino facility, plus benefits such as healthcare and 401(k).

"While we're always listening and looking at ways to improve, we remain proud of the competitive pay, comprehensive benefits, and engaging, safe work experience we provide our teams in the region," Amazon spokesperson Paul Flanigan said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Boogaloo Bois head to Ukraine to fight
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/epzv8a/boogaloo-bois-ukraine-mike-dunn
GIST	<p>Since the war in Ukraine began, some young Americans have rolled into towns there, waving flags with tropical prints. Local soldiers have sometimes assumed the foreign fighters had traveled all the way from Hawaii to join the fight against the Russian invasion.</p> <p>But in reality, those flags have nothing to do with Hawaii. They're the symbol of the American "Boogaloo" movement, a sprawling network of anti-government extremists, militiamen, and far-right members. The movement made its way offline and onto American streets in early 2020, when groups of young men in Hawaiian shirts carrying AR-style rifles started showing up to anti-lockdown protests.</p> <p>Since the "Boogaloo"—memespeak for a violent uprising or civil war—failed to materialize in the U.S., some of the movement's adherents sought battle experience elsewhere: Ukraine.</p> <p>VICE News has learned that 10 so-called "Boogaloo Bois" are preparing to deploy from the U.S. to Ukraine in the coming weeks, just as government agencies worry that American far-right extremists traveling to the conflict for combat experience could become national security threats upon their return. Vouching for them is Mike Dunn, a 21-year-old from Virginia, who was considered a leader in the Boogaloo movement and has been embroiled in the conflict in Ukraine since April. Until recently, he was</p>

recovering in a Ukrainian military hospital after his brigade came under heavy artillery in July, [leading to fatalities](#), while defending a village in the Donetsk region.

“I’ve met a couple of Americans here that are active Boogaloo Bois, and I have more Boogaloo Bois that will be arriving here,” Dunn told VICE News.

“They’ll be going through background checks and processing into whatever unit picks them,” Dunn said. “Whenever a unit takes them, they’ll process into and start fighting, to either get experience or to reignite some type of passion in their lives, for the excitement, I guess.”

Dunn, who’s a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps (and was discharged for a medical condition), said it was the same incident that killed two Americans, a Swede, and [a Canadian](#) in one of the worst incidents for foreign fighters since the war in Ukraine began, in late February. Dunn says he was part of a combat support unit made up entirely of foreign fighters attached to the 79th Brigade, a paratrooper group in the Ukrainian special forces. In his telling, a Russian advance pierced the lines of the 79th in the Donetsk region, and his unit was dispatched to stem it but was ambushed in the process.

Dunn said several nationalities were represented among the foreign fighters he works with. The International Legion, a section of the Ukrainian military set up to process international volunteers and train them, officially states that foreign fighters come from [at least 55 countries](#), with the U.S. and U.K. supplying the largest contingents.

For years, experts have warned that the war in Ukraine—which was, for a time, a frozen trench conflict isolated to Donbas—could become a training ground and terrorist hotbed for the global far-right movement. Azov Battalion, an ultranationalist unit within the Ukrainian military, is dogged by its connections to neo-Nazism and the global far-right.

So far, no strong evidence suggests the latest phase of the war has attracted scores of neo-Nazis or right-wing extremists to fight for Ukraine. Yet the problem remains on the Ukrainian government’s radar. In 2019, while the conflict was still simmering in Donbas, Ukrainian intelligence deported two American foreign fighters—one a [Marine dropout](#) and also a former member of designated terror group The Base—for their far-right terrorist activities in the country.

In recent months, U.S. government agencies have been expressing concern about the possible national security risk posed by American foreign fighters when they return home with combat experience—particularly those with ties to extremist networks. A U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) [intelligence bulletin](#) from March describes how far-right extremists and other “individuals in the United States and Europe announced intentions to join the conflict,” citing extremists who had been questioned as they left for Ukraine from JFK Airport in New York. The bulletin also flagged that the Azov Battalion is a heavy recruiter of far-right travelers into their ranks.

“What kind of training are foreign fighters receiving in Ukraine that they could possibly proliferate in U.S.-based militia and white nationalist groups?” the report asked in its conclusion.

Joshua Fisher-Birch, an expert and analyst on the far-right at the [Counter-Extremism Project](#), said some extremists may see the conflict as a chance to become battle hardened and gain military skills.

“Some right-wing extremists have viewed the war in Ukraine as an opportunity to gain critical combat experience which would otherwise be unavailable to them,” said Fisher-Birch, pointing out that war experience can also help boost their cachet within the movement at home. “Combat experience not only serves the purpose of increasing their own capabilities but passing those skill sets along to others in their movement.”

Dunn got his start in anti-government organizing in late 2019, when he latched onto [anger simmering](#) among pro-Second Amendment Virginians over proposed state gun control legislation and

participated in efforts to form county-level militias in response. In 2020, Dunn tried to position himself as a kingpin of the surging Boogaloo movement.

But a year later, with the Boogaloo and its adherents under heavy government scrutiny, Dunn and others left the movement. Dunn deleted his social media accounts, changed his phone number, and retreated from the public persona he'd built around himself.

He got a job as a guard at a prison in Virginia and lay low for a while.

Then the war broke out in Ukraine—and foreign fighters were being encouraged to join the fight. Suddenly, Dunn wanted to put his Hawaiian shirt back on.

“The day that the invasion happened, Mike [Dunn] and I were on the phone, just buzzing back and forth,” said Ken, one of the Boogaloo Bois who is deploying to Ukraine this month.

Ken, 29, asked that his full name be withheld from this story. He's been a central figure in the Boogaloo movement from its inception, though he's not as public-facing as Dunn. (He says he ran one of its biggest meme pages on Facebook, “Swamp Mountain Boogaloo,” before it got shut down by the social media company and claims it had around 100,000 followers.)

Only days after Russia invaded Ukraine, Dunn set about making plans to travel overseas. He said he was able to expedite a passport. He and a fellow Boogaloo Boi from Ohio, Henry Hoeft, even gave media interviews about their upcoming deployment.

But they weren't there for long. Hoeft returned to the U.S. after just two weeks and posted a video explaining his reasons for leaving: that foreign fighters were being used as cannon fodder and sent into tense conflict zones like in Kyiv at the height of the bombing and ground assaults on the Ukraine capital, without proper gear or weapons. It was a very common complaint among the early waves of foreign fighters, who didn't realize how intense the fighting was or the scarcity of resources facing a Ukrainian military that was resisting a far superior Russian army.

One Ukrainian special forces soldier told VICE News he understood the frustrations of some foreign fighters during those early stages of the Russian invasion.

“Of course, some [foreign fighters] were disappointed with some problems with our management, commanders, and bureaucracy,” he said. “I can understand them. Sometimes, they don't get necessary weapons or other equipment, sometimes there are some doubts about the missions.”

In online posts, other foreign fighters [widely ridiculed](#) Hoeft for leaving. Dunn, who was embedded with the Georgian National Legion at the time, says he initially left because he wanted to attend his sister's wedding. He returned in April, and when he did, this time Dunn said he was able to link up to a more elite branch of the Ukrainian war effort: a special forces group. At the outset of the war in February, some Western veterans and volunteers with real combat skills or special forces training were put under the command of the Ukrainian special forces branch, something that Kyiv wasn't even shy about [discussing at the time](#).

The CBP intelligence bulletin indicated that many of the extremists the agency feared were heading to Ukraine to fight had gotten detailed instructions on how to officially enter the country through Ukrainian government channels. The bulletin also raised the possibility that these extremists were relying on specific “websites or chat rooms” to help them obtain contacts on the ground in Ukraine.

Now, Dunn says he's helping to set up his own pipeline for other Boogaloos to join him in Ukraine.

He also runs a TikTok account called “Armed and Dedicated,” where he's posting updates and documenting life in Ukraine. He's racked up 5,000 followers and amassed more than 160,000 views on

one of his videos, where he talks about the deadly ambush that left him injured and four of his fellow foreign fighters dead.

“Rest in peace,” he says to the camera. “We took artillery and mortar to our position, just couldn’t move. I’m alive, my team is alive, we had a good firefight with the Russians out of sight. They suffered losses and retreated.” He was treated for a concussion.

Though Dunn doesn’t explicitly identify himself as a Boogaloo Boi in his TikTok, he’s remained influential in the world of young anti-government extremists, according to Ken.

Ken, who has been friends with Dunn for years, worries that Dunn has made himself a target by being so visible on his TikTok—and inspiring other young foreign fighters to come to Ukraine and join the fray.

It’s not immediately obvious what the ideological interest in Ukraine is for the Boogaloo movement, which has always been so laser-focused on grievances against the U.S. government.

Ken doesn’t personally know all of the other nine Boogaloo Bois who are headed to Ukraine, but he’s not particularly concerned about whether any in the group might be loose cannons.

“If you have a proclivity towards violence, if you’re mean in general, if you are bad, then [Ukraine] is probably the place for you,” he said. “If you’re a bad guy with some semblance of a moral compass, then you’re probably right at home.”

It was similar for Dunn. Asked whether he was concerned that he was helping bring over guys who were already radicalized, and whose only interest in the conflict was that they wanted to engage in violence, Dunn shrugged. “How is that a liability for me?” Dunn said. “Because they’re going to get it. Nor is he particularly worried about whether any of the Boogaloo Bois coming to Ukraine could wind up posing a national security risk once they return to the U.S.

“What about when anybody goes back to the U.S.?” Dunn said. “It’s not just Boogaloo Bois. Every war we’ve been involved in, you’ve had to worry about people coming back.”

“I’ll say something I said to you two years ago,” Dunn added, referring to an interview with VICE News from 2020. “It is what it is.”

Dunn sees his band of Boogaloos as international freedom fighters. “The Boogaloo, regardless of what it is against the U.S. government, it’s always been about standing up for those who can’t stand up for themselves,” Dunn said.

Ken believes there are similarities between the U.S. and the Russian Federation. “I will say that the enemy of my enemy is not always my friend,” he said. “Not that I’m going to publicly announce that I’m an enemy of the U.S. government. If I want to get on an airplane in the future, I’d probably better not say that in public. But it’s the same. A lot of the same grievances I would air with our own government are simply applicable to the Russian Federation.”

Ken, who served as an electronics technician in the U.S. Navy, told VICE News that he is trying to keep his ideological affiliations under wraps until he makes it over there.

“I’m more worried about U.S. Customs and TSA than I am the Russians,” said Ken. “The last thing I want is them to find my igloo flag folded up in my suitcase and pull me into the office to detain me and question me about it. (The Boogaloo movement adopted igloos as one of their symbols in 2020: “Big Igloo” is a homophone of Boogaloo, so they used this term to skirt social media crackdowns.)

Ken is planning to go to Ukraine for only two months, but he expects that the U.S. federal authorities will be keeping tabs on him.

“It’s entirely legal to go engage in combat with the Russian Federation and not on U.S. soil,” Ken said. “But am I expecting a visit when I get back? Yeah, I’m expecting a knock on the door and they’ll want to ask me questions. And I’m going to invoke the Fifth, and tell them that I have a very polite attorney that they’re welcome to speak to. And that’s that.”

Similarly, Dunn said he became aware that the U.S. government was tracking him in May, when Politico published the same declassified CBP intelligence bulletin (which a civil liberties group first obtained), about American citizens who had traveled abroad to fight in Ukraine.

Dunn believes he’s one of the subjects CBP officers describe in the document: “Sub1” at JFK Airport. He was headed to Warsaw, Poland, flying via Helsinki, Finland. They asked him about his status as a leader in the Boogaloo movement. He told agents that he had “not been involved with the group for almost a year due to the direction they were headed in.”

CBP told VICE News it wouldn’t comment on any cases of foreign fighters in Ukraine, even those individuals described in the bulletin.

“Due to privacy laws, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is prohibited from discussing the details of an individual U.S. citizen or traveler’s inspection, travel history or immigration status,” a CBP spokesperson said in a statement.

Fisher-Birch did note that the initial surge in chatter from far-right groups about going to Ukraine to fight has subsided somewhat since February.

“In the U.S., the extreme right has been less vocal over time in suggesting that their members or supporters become foreign fighters and has focused more on the domestic situation in the U.S. and maintaining unity within their movements,” he said, warning that the Kremlin has used mistruths about foreign fighters to justify its invasion.

“It must also be stated that the myth of a flood of extremist fighters to Ukraine is Russian government propaganda and does not reflect the actual situation.”

The Boogaloo Bois’ involvement in Ukraine, in particular, may pique the interest of U.S. officials. The movement has been in federal agencies’ line of sight since it spent much of the year 2020 plotting anarchy and violence against the U.S. government, starting with anti-lockdown protests. This was the militia movement on steroids—and with memes. Their online conversations were awash in fierce anti-government rhetoric, often tongue-in-cheek, advocating violence against the state.

Months later, the Boogaloo movement latched onto the national unrest after the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Boogaloo Bois tried to present themselves as allies to Black Lives Matter activists demanding justice for Floyd and other Black victims of police brutality. However, it became clear that the true intention of many in the movement was to advance their own broader goals of anarchy and societal collapse.

Individuals with ties to the Boogaloo movement were linked to a string of violent plots and incidents that year: a [fatal ambush](#) on a federal security officer in Oakland, a plot to [bomb an electrical substation](#) in Nevada, [shooting at a police station](#) in Minneapolis during ongoing protests, and even the alleged plot to kidnap the governor of Michigan in revenge for the state’s COVID-19 restrictions.

[A few Boogaloo Bois](#), including Dunn, even showed up on Jan. 6 at the Capitol (though he insists he never went inside and has never been charged with anything in relation). At that time, a schism was forming in the Boogaloo movement. Some felt like the joke had gone too far and they’d gotten in over their heads. As one former Boogaloo Boi who goes by “Scrappy” and plans to travel to Ukraine this fall described it, “more extremist-type people came in and ruined the group.”

	<p>“You had guys that came in that were saying that they wanted to blow stuff up or shoot people,” said Scrappy, 20. “And I left the group because I didn't want to go to jail. I didn't want to get in trouble.” He claims he even got a visit from the FBI.</p> <p>“I was just a kid at the time,” said Scrappy, who works as a mechanic in Tulsa, Oklahoma. “In all honesty, nowadays it's a terrorist organization that doesn't commit acts of terror.”</p> <p>Despite having no interest in aligning himself with the Boogaloo movement, Scrappy says he fully anticipates that the U.S. government will be monitoring him, especially given he was already on the FBI's radar to begin with.</p> <p>“I understand why they would, they have every reason to because I was part of an extremist group at one point. That's absolutely a fair observation,” Scrappy said. “And I wish they would investigate me further just in case. You know, I'm not saying that anything's going to happen, but they have a job to do at the end of the day.”</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	08/16 Seattle Fire panders to contrived complaint?
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3568995/rantz-how-one-contrived-equity-complaint-sent-seattle-fire-scrambling-to-ban-phrase/
GIST	<p>One Seattle man shamed an entire city department with a contrived complaint of racism. It prompted the Seattle Fire Department to ban the phrase “brown out.” The incident highlights how local leaders are so terrified of perceived social justice and race extremists, that they're willing to embarrass themselves to appear woke.</p> <p>Internal emails obtained by the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH show how the department kowtowed to the increasingly aggressive demands of one random Seattleite, forcing the department to write a memo it wasn't ready to deliver, and even resulting in proactively inviting the man to meet with the Fire Chief, all while it navigates a critical staffing crisis.</p> <p>The emails contained endless spelling and grammatical errors — the complainant even misspelled his first name — yet Seattle Fire jumped through hoops to please him, giving him what he wanted. Still, the complainant wasn't pleased, so SFD leadership <i>kept</i> pandering in order to be seen as inclusive.</p> <p>Everything is racist</p> <p>Armando Castillo introduced himself to the Seattle Fire Department and Seattle Office of Civil Rights as a 27-year-old “proud Latino currently living in the South Park neighborhood.”</p> <p>Castillo's email starts with a list of common complaints about life in the city: out-of-control homelessness and rising crime. He said he reached out to local police and firefighters and discovered a staffing crisis with both Seattle Fire and Seattle Police.</p> <p>During those conversations, he was outraged to find out that Seattle Fire uses a phrase he claims is racist: “brown out.” When a Seattle Fire unit, like an engine or medic, is unstaffed and offline, it is experiencing a brown out. Castillo wasn't pleased.</p> <p>“There is no irony lost in the term,” Castillo wrote on March 31. “Throughout history, it has been the tradition of the white elite to use the color black to symbolize all things negative. Black has been tied to death and all things evil and bad. It evokes strong feelings of anger, aggression, fear, and sadness. The connection between black and negativity is probably most clearly seen in our language. Just consider these commonly used expressions: Black Monday. Black Plague. Black magic. Blackball. Blackhole. Black-hearted. Black sheep. Blackmail. Black market. Blackout. The list could go on.”</p> <p>He made no mention of black gold, Black Friday, black tie affair, black belt, in the black, and other “positive” phrases. But what does this have to do with “brown out” exactly?</p>

“With the recent attention to the BIPOC communities, in particular the black community as a result of the killing of George Floyd by police, it seems as if my brown Latino community has been forgotten,” Castillo complains. “I am left angry and frustrated that the city elects to reduce my community’s emergency services and then has the audacity to call it BROWNE OUT! Wouldn’t it make sense if something is removed or omitted that was previously there, it would be WHITED OUT?”

Demanding a response

Castillo asked the city to “reflect on the message that you are sending to my community” when it uses brown out.

“The term brown out lacks cultural sensitivity. It’s time for a change!” he emailed.

Would Seattle Fire change the term? They did not respond to his email, prompting Castillo to write a follow-up email on April 10 to say it was “extremely disappointing” to not get a response. In turn, this prompted City of Seattle Human Resources Interim Director Kimberly Loving, who Castillo CC’ed, to nudge Seattle Fire into responding.

Castillo received an automated response acknowledging receipt of his email. Since he put his concerns in with a public disclosure request, Seattle Fire did not immediately address him. On April 30, he sent another email to the same group of city leaders.

“Here we are, a month from my original email. I have heard nothing from any Seattle official addressing my concerns or even so much as a sympathetic ear!” he wrote. “I am a little surprised but mostly disappointed that I didn’t even get an acknowledgment from the fire chief that my concerns are being heard!”

He warned them that they could be “rest assured that my community will not stand for a continuing ‘Brown out,’ before offering “white out” as a suitable replacement (“I’m [sic] still partial to “White out” if you need some advise [sic] and can’t come up with something a little more neutral.”

In this email, Castillo appears to have misspelled his name, writing “Armondo” instead of “Armando.” It was one of many errors that might lead the city to dismiss him. But they took him seriously.

Finally, some pandering

Seattle Fire’s Human Resources Director Sarah Lee finally responded. She assured him that she would “be checking on the historical use of the terms ‘brown out,’ and we will be getting back to you regarding your concerns this week.”

But historical records are of no interest to Castillo.

“I do not care much if you find there has been a historical use of the term ‘brown out!’ As a society, we have done many things throughout history that, upon reflection, have proven to be exclusive and culturally insensitive! (Ex: Washington Redskins) I’m sure with very little effort, you can think of many examples, both culturally or gender-specific that, in hindsight, insight [sic] bias, resentment, and anger! Awareness is the start of change. I am looking to you to help inspire change,” he wrote.

Three days later, Lee sent a follow-up email to Castillo. Equity will soon be reached!

“SFD management discussed your concerns and SFD will no longer use the term ‘brown outs’ but will now use ‘unit(s) unavailable’ to describe when engines/EMS units are not in service. Thank you for bringing your concerns to us. We hope this change reaffirms SFD’s commitment and mission to serve all communities with dignity and respect,” Lee wrote.

Browbeat by a politically correct activist

No emails disclosed via public disclosure request at this time show Seattle Fire leadership actually found the term to be offensive or racist. There's no history of the term being used in an offensive way, nor any complaints have been found; it's been used to say something is "partially" offline, usually electricity.

Still, based on *one* complaint, from *one* 27-year-old speaking on behalf of a community that doesn't appear to have complained, Seattle Fire was willing to ban a phrase from use in the department. Emails suggest that Castillo still wasn't satisfied.

While he thanked Seattle Fire for the move, he complained that "unit(s) unavailable" is misleading. He then requested that "more affluent neighborhoods" see their units go offline. And he made an observation.

This did not go over well with one member of Seattle Fire's leadership.

"I'm not going to engage this person on any level about staffing issues," a senior leader wrote in an email to Seattle Fire HR.

He followed up with an apology email.

"I'm sorry I was so abrupt. My point is he can not influence who gets shut down and why. We are under enough pressure from internal groups and the Union. No one wants it, and everyone thinks someone else should be doing it," he wrote.

You better answer me!

Four days later, Castillo sent another email.

"Apparently, you felt like my question's in my last email were rhetorical. I really don't understand why I didn't get a response [sic] from anyone from within the fire department regarding my last email!" he complained.

And he wasn't done.

"On top of that, I recently ran into a one [sic] of my local fire engines at a local coffee house. They informed me that they hadn't heard anything regarding the change in terminology when fire engines are [sic] out of service due to lack of personnel. I feel like I got lip service regarding the change," he complained.

This email complaint prompted an invite for Castillo to meet Seattle Fire Chief Harold Scoggins.

"We would like to offer you the opportunity to come and meet with Fire Chief Scoggins in person to discuss your concerns. If that isn't possible, we can arrange a phone or video call," emailed Helen Fitzpatrick, the Executive Director of Administration. "Email communications are not always the best way to have a dialogue around complex issues. As SFD HR Director Sarah Lee communicated to you in a previous email, the department remains committed to serving all communities with dignity and respect."

Castillo declined the invitation. He wondered why two weeks wasn't enough time to make the changes concerning the use of the faux-offensive term.

Seattle Fire gave in

HR Director Lee emailed leadership on May 15 that she thinks they need to send out "a memo to SFD all regarding the new term units unavailable to make sure everyone is aware." On May 27, Lee also informed Castillo of the intent to circulate a memo.

Castillo hoped to be CC'ed on a memo, but it never happened.

"Here we are, two weeks later, after you stated you were creating a memo regarding the change. I assumed I just wasn't included. However, I recently just found out while talking to my local fire engine crew that

they still have not heard of the change. I was hopeful after all we went through the last two months to get to this point of a culture shift would be swift,” he wrote on June 9.

Four days later, Chief Scoggins sent a memo announcing the changes.

The Seattle Fire Department will no longer use the term “brown out” when describing department apparatus that aren’t in service. Instead, the department is using the term “units unstaffed.”

Please ensure that any formal or informal communications going forward, whether in department emails, memos, etc., uses “units unstaffed” to refer to engine, trucks, aid cars, medic units, etc., that are unavailable due to staffing.

Concerns were raised that the term “brown out” has negative connotations for communities of color. This change has been made to reaffirm SFD’s commitment and mission to serve all communities with dignity and respect.

Many firefighters ridiculed the memo in messages to the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH.

Seattle Fire cares more about word policing than public safety

Seattle Fire is in the middle of an unprecedented staffing crisis.

After the COVID vaccine mandate, the department was left with dozens of open positions. It’s the very reason why so many units are browned out, impacting public safety.

According to [internal documents obtained](#) by the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH, Seattle Fire was understaffed 69% of the time through June of 2022. It spent over \$11 million to fund overtime to cover the vacancies.

Through June, the SFD was fully staffed only 31% (50) of the time, and not fully staffed 69% of the time (108 days). This disparity between 69% and the slide is that stat was through June 11, and the new stat accounts for all of June. This equates to 486 total units browned out this year, compared to 176 total units offline last year at this time.

The Seattle Firefighters Union, Local 27, has been sounding the alarms for months. They now [upload daily staffing numbers](#) that show which units are browned out.

Scoggins, however, has been relatively silent on the crisis, with no external communications strategy to quell any public concern over safety. Yet he and his department had time to waste on one contrived complaint over a term we’re supposed to pretend is racist.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Military clamps down on racist speech
SOURCE	https://www.tucsonsentinel.com/nationworld/report/081622_military_extremism/faced-with-rise-extremism-ranks-us-military-clamps-down-racist-speech-including-retweets-likes/
GIST	<p>Less than a month after the Jan. 6, 2021, assault on the U.S. Capitol, Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin took the extraordinary step of pausing all operations for 24 hours to “address extremism in the ranks.” Pentagon officials had been shaken by service members’ prominent role in the events of Jan. 6.</p> <p>Of the 884 criminal defendants charged to date with taking part in the insurrection, more than 80 were veterans. That’s almost 10% of those charged.</p> <p>More remarkable, at least five of the rioters were serving in the military at the time of the assault: an active-duty Marine officer and four reservists.</p>

Service members' involvement in the insurrection has made the spread of extremism – particularly [white nationalism](#) – a significant issue for the U.S. military.

Solving the problem

A blue ribbon committee called the [Countering Extremist Activity Working Group](#) was quickly commissioned in April 2021 to evaluate the extent of the problem.

The group found about [100 substantiated cases](#) of extremism in the U.S. armed forces in 2021.

The latest instance occurred in July 2022, when Francis Harker, a National Guard member with [white supremacist connections](#), was sentenced to four years in prison for planning an anti-government attack on police. Harker, who carried a picture saying “[there is no God but Hitler](#),” was planning to attack police officers in Virginia Beach, Virginia, with Molotov cocktails and semi-automatic rifles.

Worried, Austin has [tightened the rules](#) regarding political speech within the military. The new rules prohibit any statement that advocates for “violence to achieve goals that are [political ... or ideological](#) in nature.” The ban applies to members of the military both on and off duty.

Also, for the first time, the new rules prohibit statements on social media that “promote or otherwise endorse extremist activities.”

While the intent behind the new rules is laudable, political speech – even of an offensive or distasteful nature – goes to the [core of U.S. democracy](#). Americans in uniform are still Americans, protected by [the First Amendment](#) and afforded [the constitutional right of free speech](#).

In light of the stricter policy, it is useful to consider how courts apply the First Amendment in the military context.

Good order and discipline

While soldiers and sailors are certainly not excluded from the protection of the First Amendment, it is fair to say they operate under a [diluted version](#) of it.

As one federal judge observed, the “sweep of the protection is [less comprehensive](#) in the military context, given the different character of the military community and mission.”

The “right to speak out as a free American” [must be balanced](#) against “providing an effective fighting force for the defense of our Country,” a federal judge noted in a separate case.

These and other federal judges point to the military’s need for [good order and discipline](#) in justifying this approach.

While never precisely defined, good order and discipline is generally considered being obedient to orders, having respect for one’s chain of command and showing allegiance to the Constitution. Speech that “prevents the orderly [accomplishment of the mission](#)” or “promotes [disloyalty and dissatisfaction](#)” within the ranks harms good order and discipline, and can be restricted.

In 1974, for example, the [Supreme Court](#) ruled that the Army can punish an officer for encouraging subordinates to refuse to deploy.

The officer’s comments included: “The United States is wrong in being involved in the Vietnam War. I would refuse to go back to Vietnam if ordered to do so.”

In 1980, [the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals](#) ruled that the Army could legally fire an ROTC cadet for making racist remarks during a newspaper interview.

Explaining his political philosophy, [the cadet said](#): “What I am saying is that Blacks are obviously further behind the whites on the evolutionary scale.”

In 2012, [a San Diego district court](#) ruled that the Marine Corps can lawfully discharge a sergeant who mocked president Barack Obama while appearing on the “Chris Matthews Show.” At one point the sergeant told the host: “As an active duty Marine, I say screw Obama and I will not follow his orders.”

While each of these statements is protected by the First Amendment in civilian life, they crossed the line in military life because they were deemed harmful to morale and represented what one federal court described as more than “political discussion ... at an [enlisted or officers’ club](#).”

The military’s job is to fight, not debate

In deciding these First Amendment cases, courts often hark back to why the military exists in the first place.

“It is the primary business of armies and navies ... [to fight the nation’s wars](#) should the occasion arise,” the Supreme Court said in 1955.

In a separate case, the Supreme Court declared: “[An army is not a deliberate body](#). It is the executive arm. Its law is that of obedience.”

Quickly [following orders](#) can mark the difference between life and death in combat.

On a national level, the degree to which an army is [disciplined](#) can win or lose wars. A mindset of obedience does not come solely from classroom training but from repeated rehearsals under realistic conditions.

As a military judge observed in a [1972 decision](#), while service members are free to discuss political issues when off duty, the “primary function of a military organization is to execute orders, not to debate the wisdom of decisions that the Constitution entrusts” to Congress, the judiciary and the commander in chief.

New policy bans ‘liking’ extremist messages

The U.S. military’s revised approach to political speech prohibits retweeting or even “liking” messages that promote anti-government or white nationalist and other extremist groups.

Does a restriction this broad comply with legal precedent?

As [a law professor](#) who has served more than 20 years in the U.S military, I believe the broader rules will probably be upheld if challenged on First Amendment grounds.

The most comparable case is [Blameuser v. Andrews](#), a 1980 case from the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals where an ROTC cadet espoused white supremacist political views in a newspaper interview.

Amongst other extremist remarks, [the cadet told the reporter](#): “You see, I believe that in the final analysis, the Nazi Socialist Party will take over America and possibly the whole world.”

Finding that the statements harmed good order and discipline, the Seventh Circuit ruled that the Army did not violate the First Amendment when it subsequently removed him from the officer training program.

The cadet’s “views on race relations draw into question his ability to obey commands, especially in a situation in which he regards the military superior as socially inferior,” the [Blameuser decision](#) said.

The military has wide latitude in deciding who is deserving of the “[special trust and confidence](#)” that comes with military employment. Military officials are free to consider political and social beliefs that are “inimical to the vital mission of the agency” in making hiring and firing decisions, the [Blameuser decision](#) said.

	Social media posts expressing support for violent political activities will likely be treated in the same way. As the Seventh Circuit said in Blameuser, by liking or retweeting an extremist message, a service member's actions are " demonstrably incompatible with the important public office" they hold.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/16 Court: transgender protected under ADA
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/aug/16/transgender-people-protected-discrimination-under/
GIST	<p>A federal appeals court ruled Tuesday that transgender people who experience gender dysphoria are protected from discrimination under the Americans with Disabilities Act, a ruling with major implications for single-sex restrooms, sports and prisons.</p> <p>The ADA specifically excludes "transvestitism," "transsexualism," and "gender identity disorders not resulting from physical impairments," but the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond ruled that "gender dysphoria" isn't the same.</p> <p>"The ADA excludes from its protection anything falling within the plain meaning of 'gender identity disorders,' as that term was understood 'at the time of its enactment,'" said U.S. District Court Judge Diana Gribbon Motz, a Clinton appointee, in the 56-page decision.</p> <p>"But nothing in the ADA, then or now, compels the conclusion that gender dysphoria constitutes a 'gender identity disorder' excluded from ADA protection," said Judge Motz. "For these reasons, we agree with Williams that, as a matter of statutory construction, gender dysphoria is not a gender identity disorder."</p> <p>The ruling on behalf of Kesha Williams, a former inmate at the Fairfax County Adult Detention Center, was hailed by transgender-rights advocates as a pivotal victory.</p> <p>"This is a huge win. There is no principled reason to exclude transgender people from our federal civil rights laws," said Jennifer Levi, the transgender rights project director at the Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders. "It's incredibly significant for a federal appeals court to affirm that the protections in our federal disability rights laws extend to transgender people."</p> <p>The decision, which reversed the trial-court ruling, could remove remaining barriers to male-born inmates with a gender-dysphoria diagnosis from being housed in female corrections facilities nationwide.</p> <p>Joshua Block, staff attorney at the American Civil Liberties Union's LGBTQ & HIV Project, said the "effort to exclude transgender people from their rightful protections under the ADA was always baseless and discriminatory."</p> <p>"Transgender people are denied a multitude of reasonable rights and accommodations, particularly while incarcerated, and today's ruling is a step forward for their fairness and equality," Mr. Block said.</p> <p>Meanwhile, advocates of single-sex facilities and categories blasted the ruling.</p> <p>"Absolutely bonkers decision out of 4th Circuit," tweeted Keep Prisons Single Sex USA. "'Gender dysphoria' is not the same as 'gender identity disorder' therefore, 'GD' is covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act even though being 'trans' itself not considered a disability."</p> <p>Indeed, the ruling suggests that gender dysphoria is in fact a disability, a contentious view within the LGBTQ community.</p> <p>"On one hand, reading the law to include transgender people gives them added legal protections," said the analysis by the Washington Blade, an LGBTQ publication. "On the other hand, transgender advocates have fighting hard for years to make the case being transgender isn't a mental disorder."</p>

	<p>The lawsuit filed against Fairfax County Sheriff Stacey Kincaid said that the inmate incarcerated in 2018 was initially assigned to a female housing unit, but transferred to the male facility after telling a nurse that she still had male genitalia.</p> <p>Williams went two weeks without “her prescribed hormone medication for gender dysphoria,” and “began experiencing significant mental and emotional distress.”</p> <p>Williams was also “repeatedly harassed her regarding her sex and gender identity” by inmates as well as prison deputies who called her “mister,” “sir,” “he,” and “gentleman.” Williams sued after being released in May 2019.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	08/17 Donetsk ‘bilateral cooperation’ with NKorea
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/17/donetsk-self-proclaimed-leader-pledges-bilateral-cooperation-with-north-korea
GIST	<p>North Korea and the Russian-occupied Donetsk region of Ukraine will develop “equally beneficial bilateral cooperation”, its self-appointed leader has said in a letter to Kim Jong-un, according to state media.</p> <p>Denis Pushilin made the pledge in a message congratulating Kim on the 15 August Korean liberation day, North Korean state news agency KCNA reported, two days after reporting a similar message from Russian president, Vladimir Putin, to Kim.</p> <p>“The people of the Donbas region, too, are fighting to regain their freedom and justice of history today just as the Korean people did 77 years ago,” the report cited Pushilin’s letter as saying.</p> <p>“The message expressed the conviction that an equally beneficial bilateral cooperation agreeing with the interests of the peoples of the two countries will be achieved between the People’s Republic of Donetsk and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,” KCNA added, using the official name of North Korea.</p> <p>Pushilin has previously said he hoped for “fruitful cooperation” and increased trade with North Korea. Last month, Russia’s ambassador in Pyongyang, Alexander Matsegora, said North Korean labour could be sent to help rebuild the war-shattered infrastructure in the self-proclaimed people’s republics in Donetsk and Luhansk.</p> <p>Matsegora said there were potentially “a lot of opportunities” for economic cooperation between the North and the self-proclaimed republics in Ukraine’s Donbas region, despite UN sanctions.</p> <p>He told the Russian newspaper Izvestia in an interview, according to Seoul-based website NK News, that “highly qualified and hard-working Korean builders, who are capable of working in the most difficult conditions, could help us restore our social, infrastructure and industrial facilities”.</p> <p>North Korea has traditionally earned much-needed foreign currency by sending its citizens to work overseas. Under UN-sanctions they were supposed to have been repatriated by the end of 2019, but significant numbers of North Korean labourers have reportedly continued to work in Russia and China, as well as in Laos and Vietnam, after the deadline.</p> <p>Earlier this week, Putin told the North Korean ruler that Russia and North Korea would “expand the comprehensive and constructive bilateral relations with common efforts”, according to a letter cited by KCNA on Monday.</p> <p>The letter claimed closer ties would be in both countries’ interests, and would help strengthen the security and stability of the Korean peninsula and the north-eastern Asian region.</p>

During a speech at the Moscow international security conference on Tuesday, Putin said Russia would provide its allies and partners with “advanced weapons and military equipment” as well as working to create new “mechanisms of international security”.

Kim reportedly sent a letter of reply to Putin saying Russian-North Korean friendship had been forged in the second world war with victory over Japan. Their “strategic and tactical cooperation, support and solidarity” had since reached a new level in their common efforts to frustrate threats and provocations from hostile military forces, Kim said in the letter. KCNA did not identify the hostile forces, but it has typically used that term to refer to the US and its allies.

Kim predicted cooperation between Russia and North Korea would grow based on an agreement signed in 2019 when he met with Putin.

In July, North Korea recognised the self-proclaimed Donetsk (DPR) and Luhansk People’s Republics (LPR) in eastern Ukraine’s Donbas region, as independent states.

The move made North Korea only the third country after Russia and Syria to recognise the two breakaway entities.

In a statement backing the self-proclaimed republics, the North Korean foreign ministry said Ukraine has “no right to raise issue or dispute our legitimate exercise of sovereignty after committing an act that severely lacks fairness and justice between nations by actively joining the US unjust and illegal hostile policy in the past”.

In response, Ukraine immediately severed relations with Pyongyang over the move.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/17 Day 175 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/17/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-175-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There could be more attacks in the “next two or three months” similar to the strikes in Crimea, a key adviser to Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said in an exclusive interview with the Guardian. Mykhailo Podolyak said Ukraine is engaged in a counteroffensive aimed at creating “chaos within Russian forces” by striking at the invaders’ supply lines deep into occupied territories.• Ukraine has hinted it was behind a series of mysterious and devastating strikes in occupied Crimea that destroyed a key railway junction used for supplying Russian troops and a military airbase. Several explosions on Tuesday appeared to have destroyed a Russian ammunition depot and an electricity substation about 125 miles (200km) from the frontline with Ukrainian forces. Russia blamed saboteurs for orchestrating the series of explosions.• The leaders of Ukraine, Turkey and the UN are set to meet to review the grain export deal in Lviv on Thursday. UN secretary general António Guterres, Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskiy and Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan will also discuss “the need for a political solution to this conflict” and the situation at the Russian-controlled Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said.• Ukraine’s nuclear operator reported what it called an “unprecedented” cyberattack on its website, but said its operations have not been disrupted. “On August 16, 2022, the most powerful cyberattack since the start of the Russian invasion occurred against Energoatom’s website,” the operator said, adding it “was attacked from Russian territory”.• North Korea and the Russian-backed separatist Donetsk region of Ukraine will develop “equally beneficial bilateral cooperation”, Denis Pushilin, head of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People’s Republic, said in a letter to Kim Jong-un, North Korean state media reported on Wednesday.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first ship to depart Ukraine under a grain export deal docked in Syria on Tuesday, according to a shipping source and satellite data. Another ship carrying the first cargo of food aid bound for Africa also left Ukraine's ports. • Russia's defence ministry has warned Britain against a planned spy plane flight over Russian territory, saying its air force has been given orders to prevent an intrusion. The ministry said the UK sent a notice informing about a planned flight of an RC-135 reconnaissance plane along a route that partly passes over Russian territory. "We regard this action as a deliberate provocation," the ministry said. • Estonian authorities removed a Soviet-era tank from its pedestal in the eastern city of Narva, the most significant removal yet out of an estimated 200 to 400 such monuments that the government has pledged to take down by the end of the year. "No one wants to see our militant and hostile neighbour foment tensions in our home," prime minister, Kaja Kallas, said on Tuesday. Estonia will also this week close its border to more than 50,000 Russians with previously issued visas. • Finland announced it will cut the number of visas it issues to Russians to 10% of current volumes from 1 September after Russian tourists begun using the country as a gateway to European holiday destinations. Finland will also join the Baltic states in jointly proposing the discontinuation of an EU visa facilitation agreement with Russia that makes it easier and cheaper for Russians to travel to and within the EU, foreign minister, Pekka Haavisto, said.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/16 Russia warns UK against spy plane flight
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/16/russia-warns-britain-against-planned-spy-plane-overflight
GIST	<p>Russia's defence ministry has warned Britain against a planned spy plane flight over Russian territory, saying its air force has been given orders to prevent an intrusion.</p> <p>The ministry said on Tuesday that the UK had sent a notice informing about a planned flight of an RC-135 reconnaissance plane along a route that partly passes over Russian territory.</p> <p>"We regard this action as a deliberate provocation," the ministry said, adding that the Russian air force had been "given the task to prevent the violation of the Russian border".</p> <p>It said: "All possible consequences of this deliberate provocation will lie entirely with the British side."</p> <p>It did not specify when and where the British flight was planned.</p> <p>On Monday the ministry said a Russian fighter jet was scrambled to intercept a British RC-135 reconnaissance plane that crossed the Russian border near the Svyatoi Nos cape between the Barents Sea and the White Sea. The MiG-31 fighter forced the intruder out, the ministry said.</p> <p>A UK Ministry of Defence spokesperson said: "A Russian MiG-31 jet conducted an unsafe close pass of an RAF RC-135W Rivet Joint aircraft as it carried out a routine operation in international airspace over the Norwegian and Barents Seas on Monday 15 August.</p> <p>"The UK aircraft was in communication with Russian civilian air traffic control and its crew operated in a safe and professional manner."</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/16 Ukraine create 'chaos within Russia forces'
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/16/creating-chaos-zelenskiys-adviser-outlines-ukraines-military-strategy
GIST	Ukraine is engaged in a counteroffensive aimed at creating "chaos within Russian forces" by striking at the invaders' supply lines deep into occupied territories, according to a key adviser to the president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy.

Mykhailo Podolyak told the Guardian there could be more attacks in the “next two or three months” similar to Tuesday’s mysterious strikes on a railway junction and an airbase in Crimea, as well as last week’s hit on Russian warplanes at the peninsula’s Saky aerodrome.

Russia said a fire on Tuesday had set off explosions at a munitions depot in the Dzhankoi district of Crimea – an incident that Podolyak said was a reminder that “Crimea occupied by Russians is about warehouse explosions and high risk of death for invaders and thieves”.

Ukraine has not claimed responsibility for the attacks. They have prompted Russian tourists to flee Crimea in panic. There were queues on Tuesday outside the railway station at the regional capital, Simferopol.

The defence ministry in Moscow said it was dealing with cases of sabotage and taking “necessary measures” to prevent further episodes.

Speaking from the presidential offices in Kyiv, Podolyak said: “Our strategy is to destroy the logistics, the supply lines and the ammunition depots and other objects of military infrastructure. It’s creating a chaos within their own forces.”

The adviser, often described as the country’s third most powerful figure, said Kyiv’s approach ran counter to Moscow’s use of blunt artillery power to gain territory in the Donbas region to the east, which has seen Russian troops destroy cities such as Mariupol and Sievierodonetsk in order to gain territory.

“So Russia has kind of taught everybody that a counteroffensive requires huge amounts of manpower like a giant fist and just go in one direction,” he said, but “a Ukrainian counteroffensive looks very different. We don’t use the tactics of the 60s and 70s, of the last century.”

However, the remarks could also be interpreted as an acknowledgment that Ukraine is struggling to amass the amount of men and military material required to sustain a full counteroffensive in the south of the country, which typically requires a superiority of three or more soldiers to one.

Instead, Ukraine has tried to cut off Kherson, the one city held by Russia on the west bank of the Dnieper River, by damaging road and rail bridges using newly supplied western rocket artillery to the point where it is no longer possible for Russia to resupply its forces effectively.

Podolyak asked for “50, 60, 80 more” MLRS (multiple launch rocket systems) on top of an existing arsenal of about 20, 16 of which are truck-mounted Himars supplied by the US. Three – the track-wheeled M270 – have come from the UK, with three more promised, which the adviser described as “very good”.

Helped by the long-range missiles supplied by the west, Podolyak added that Ukraine hoped to degrade the invaders’ strength through “lack of supplies and lack of ammunition” that “will make Russians fight like they did on the first months of the war”.

In the early phase of the conflict a disorganised Russian military failed to capture Kyiv after the invading forces became clogged up in a series of traffic jams on roads leading into the city, making them vulnerable to Ukrainian infantry and anti-tank weapons.

The presidential aide suggested that last week’s airbase attack could have been the work of partisans, but playfully dismissed any suggestion it could have been an accident, as had been suggested by Moscow in its immediate aftermath.

Podolyak said Russians had “a different physics” if they believed the blasts the result of discarded cigarettes causing munitions dumps to explode, before going on to anticipate a repeat of such attacks behind the lines in the future.

"I certainly agree with the Russian ministry for defence, which is predicting more incidents of this kind in the next two, three months. I think we might see more of those happening," Podolyak said.

He also signalled that Ukraine regards the Crimean Bridge linking the occupied peninsula with the Russian mainland as a legitimate military target. "It's an illegal construction and the main gateway to supply the Russian army in Crimea. Such objects should be destroyed," he said.

Although Ukraine has refused to take public responsibility for the attack on the Saky airbase, it has done so in private, and the incident has come at time when a string of Russian strategic targets have been hit deep behind the frontline.

On Monday there was speculation that Yevgeny Prigozhin, a Russian businessman reportedly tied to the Wagner private military company, could have been wounded or killed in a Ukrainian rocket strike in the Donbas.

Photos published by a Russian journalist of the man's meeting with Wagner mercenaries in east Ukraine made the location of the base easy to identify. And on Sunday, the building at Mironivska was hit by a Ukrainian artillery strike, probably from a Himars system.

Podolyak, who was a peace talks negotiator in the early phases of the conflict, said there was no prospect of Russia negotiating seriously until it experienced a defeat on the battlefield. He said some unnamed European countries were "under the illusion" that the Kremlin may seek talks in good faith.

"Russian ears only open up when there is a giant military bat hitting the Russian head," he said.

He praised Britain's role in supporting Ukraine so far, which in some respects had exceeded that of the US, and said he expected strong support to continue after Boris Johnson steps down as prime minister. "You became a giant – it's hard to go back to being a midget," he said.

Johnson had offered "personal and emotional backing" to Zelenskiy in the "darkest day of Ukrainian history", Podolyak said. The UK's contribution would be remembered for centuries, he suggested.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/17 UK inflation tops 10%; gloomy for Europe
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-k-inflation-tops-10-underlining-gloomy-outlook-for-europe-11660718161?mod=hp_lead_pos1
GIST	<p>The U.K.'s annual rate of inflation moved into double digits in July and is set to rise even higher by the end of the year, heaping greater pressure on stretched household budgets and threatening a lengthy economic contraction.</p> <p>That pickup in inflation has been replicated in other parts of Europe, even as consumer prices have started to slow in the U.S. That is because energy prices have continued to accelerate across Europe as Russia withholds supplies of natural gas, with the continent facing a possible crunch this winter.</p> <p>The U.K.'s Office for National Statistics Wednesday said consumer prices were 10.1% higher in July than a year earlier, up from 9.4% in June. That was the highest rate of inflation in more than four decades and the fastest increase in prices recorded in one of the Group of Seven rich countries since the current surge started in early 2021.</p> <p>"Inflation figures continue to paint a worrying picture for consumers and businesses alike, and price pressures are set to build further," said Alpesh Paleja, lead economist at the Confederation of British Industry.</p>

Figures to be released Thursday by the European Union's statistics agency are expected to show the eurozone's annual rate of inflation rose to 8.9% in July from 8.6% in June. By contrast, U.S. inflation eased to 8.5% in July from 9.1% in June.

Economists at JPMorgan see increasing signs that global inflation is set to ease, with prices of food and many commodities down from recent peaks. However, they expect that disinflation to be evident first in the U.S., with Europe set to lag behind despite some recent easing in the prices of goods leaving factory gates.

"Europe, however, faces ongoing pressure from surging natural gas prices that have more than doubled over the past three months," they wrote in a note to clients. "We expect the combined drag of a squeeze on purchasing power and depressed sentiment to tip the region into recession this year."

July is unlikely to mark the peak in U.K. inflation, since household energy costs are set to rise sharply when a cap on prices is lifted in October. The Bank of England estimates that could send the annual rate of inflation to 13% as the year draws to a close.

The U.K. is suffering a particularly severe surge in prices in part because of its 2016 decision to leave the European Union, which has caused costs for importers to increase, while a weaker pound has also raised the prices of goods and services purchased overseas. Brexit has also reduced the availability of foreign workers in some lower-paid services industries, such as hospitality, pushing costs and prices higher.

However, the U.K. might not be the only one of Europe's three G-7 members set to face the double-digit inflation that has already hit Spain, Greece and a number of the EU's eastern members.

Germany's gas regulator Monday announced a surcharge on gas prices designed to cover most of the increased costs to home energy suppliers since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Economists estimate that will send Germany's annual rate of inflation above 10% from 7.5% in July.

U.K. figures released Tuesday by the ONS showed wages excluding bonuses were 4.7% higher in the three months through June than a year earlier, a pickup from the 4.4% rate of growth recorded in the three months through May.

Much of the pickup came from the private sector, where wages were up 5.9% when bonuses are included. Many businesses are giving workers one-off payments to help cover surging energy and food costs, as well as standard pay rises. Labor union Unite on Monday said British Airways had agreed to pay its check-in staff a lump sum equivalent to 5% of their salaries this month, with a regular 5% pay rise to follow in September, and a further 3% increase in January.

"Like most other workers, our members in BA are struggling with the cost of living crisis," said Oliver Richardson, a Unite official.

The acceleration in wage rises will worry the Bank of England, which wants to avert a self-reinforcing series of wage and price rises of the kind that kept inflation high for many years in the 1970s.

Even as it picked up, wage growth fell further behind the rate of inflation, with the result that real wages fell 4.1%, the largest decline since records began in 2001.

The government has already announced three packages of support to help households meet higher energy bills without having to cut back on other essentials, but economists expect a fourth package to follow the election of a new prime minister early next month.

The government's response to what has become known as the cost-of-living crisis has been on hold since Prime Minister Boris Johnson was ousted as head of the ruling Conservative Party in early July, and the lengthy process of choosing his successor is due to end on Sept. 5.

	<p>The German government, and others in Europe, are also considering additional support for households who will see their budgets shredded by skyrocketing energy costs as these percolate down to end users in the second half of the year.</p> <p>“We’re putting together another relief package,” German Chancellor Olaf Scholz wrote in a tweet Monday. “We don’t leave anyone alone with the higher costs.”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/16 US to buy Ukraine grain; more shipments
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-to-buy-ukraine-grain-as-ship-traffic-increases-11660686859?mod=hp_lead_pos7
GIST	<p>The U.S. Agency for International Development is spending more than \$68 million to purchase and ship Ukrainian grain in the largest such export deal since Russia’s invasion this year and the start of a July agreement to allow for renewed shipments from Ukraine’s Black Sea ports.</p> <p>USAID is providing the funds to the World Food Program, a United Nations agency that historically gets the biggest part of its grain from Ukraine, to purchase, ship and store up to 150,000 metric tons of wheat, the agency said.</p> <p>“While this additional wheat will be used to help feed people in countries facing severe hunger and malnutrition, much more is needed to help the world recover from the global devastation caused by Putin’s brutal war,” USAID administrator Samantha Power said in a statement.</p> <p>The U.S. so far has provided \$4.8 billion to the World Food Program this year, the most of any year. Some of those donations come from the emergency humanitarian funding that Congress gave USAID in May in response to the conflict in Ukraine and the global repercussions.</p> <p>The July grain export deal, brokered by the United Nations and Turkey, has been gathering momentum in recent days as the pace of ships moving in and out of Ukrainian ports has accelerated.</p> <p>Five more ships left Ukraine under the agreement on Tuesday in the largest single convoy to depart since the deal was signed in July. Another four ships were set to be inspected in Istanbul on their way to Ukraine, according to the Turkish defense ministry.</p> <p>The shipments have raised hopes that the Black Sea grain corridor can meet the U.N.’s goal of alleviating a global hunger crisis caused in part by the invasion. The Russian attack in February trapped millions of tons of grain and other foodstuffs in Ukraine, contributing to a surge in world food prices that has pushed tens of millions of people closer to starving.</p> <p>Before the war, Ukraine exported about 10% of the world’s wheat, and was a key supplier to countries in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, where the food crisis has been most severe.</p> <p>The increasing tempo of Ukraine’s Black Sea exports is the result of frenzied work in recent weeks by Ukrainian, Turkish, and U.N. officials who have been racing to operationalize the agreement since it was signed in July. In recent days the first ships to both enter and leave Ukrainian ports have departed safely in a rare sign of normality along Ukraine’s vital shipping lanes.</p> <p>U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres plans to meet with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan Aug. 18 in Lviv, according to a U.N. spokesman, before visiting the port of Odessa, one of the three ports being used as part of the Black Sea Grain Initiative.</p> <p>Before returning to New York, Mr. Guterres will also visit the joint coordination center in Istanbul that was set up to implement the initiative, the spokesman said.</p>

The future of the agreement remains clouded by uncertainty since it depends on the warring parties refraining from attacks on the ships and the three ports covered by the agreement. Russian forces fired missiles at the port of Odessa just hours after officials signed the agreement in late July.

The signing of the agreement in July [pushed wheat prices to their lowest](#) level since the invasion in February. Benchmark Chicago wheat futures fell on Tuesday to \$7.86 a bushel.

Among the ships that departed Ukraine on Tuesday was the first vessel carrying a humanitarian cargo of wheat. The ship, the Brave Commander, is carrying 23,000 tons of wheat for the World Food Program in Ethiopia, a mission partly funded by USAID.

In a twist, the first ship to depart Ukraine under the agreement turned back before delivering its cargo of corn to Lebanon after both buyer and seller mutually agreed to call off the transaction this week, the Ukrainian embassy in Beirut said. The ship, the Razoni, is now believed to be near the Syrian port of Tartus, State Department spokesman Ned Price said Tuesday, citing unspecified reports.

U.N. officials have said that they expect the number of applications from commercial shippers to transit the corridor to increase in the coming weeks.

Under the agreement, Ukrainian pilots are to guide the ships between mines laid by both Ukraine and Russia in the Black Sea. Teams of inspectors check each ship as it enters and exits the Black Sea through the Bosphorus, while a control center staffed by U.N. officials and military officers from Russia, Ukraine, Turkey oversees the operation.

So far, 21 ships have been authorized to leave three Ukrainian ports in and around Odessa under the agreement, according to the United Nations. The ships carried a total of 563,317 metric tons of corn, wheat, sunflower meal, soy beans, sunflower oil and other products.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Seattle to host 2023 MLB All-Star Game
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/sports/mark-your-calendars-mariners-announce-date-for-2023-mlb-all-star-game-in-seattle
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - The Mariners announced on Tuesday the official date that Seattle will host the 2023 MLB All-Star Game at T-Mobile Park.</p> <p>Next summer will be the third time in Mariners history that the team will host the Major League Baseball All-Star Game. According to team officials, the best players of the National League and the American League will go head-to-head in Seattle on July 11, 2023.</p> <p>"Major League Baseball is delighted to bring the All-Star Game to the Mariners and their fans in 2023. The City of Seattle has been home to many of our game's most popular figures in recent history, and we look forward to showcasing the sport's current stars and everything that All-Star Week has to offer throughout the Emerald City," said Baseball Commissioner Robert D. Manfred, Jr. in a 2021 MLB press release. "I congratulate the Mariners organization and the local leadership in the City of Seattle and state of Washington for their efforts to bring the Midsummer Classic back to the Pacific Northwest at T-Mobile Park for a second time."</p> <p>In 1979, the Seattle Mariners hosted the MLB All-Star Game at the Kingdome, when the National League claimed victory over the American League with a 7-6 win. In 2001, the American league earned a 4-1 victory at T-Mobile Park, formerly known as Safeco Field.</p> <p>Mariner fans who purchased season tickets prior to August 12, 2022, will receive priority access to buy 2023 All-Star Week strips. Fans who purchased on or after August 12 will receive priority presale access.</p>

	<p>"The All-Star Week is an unparalleled opportunity to fulfill these key tenants of our purpose and mission and an amazing opportunity to show off our region to the nation and world," said Mariners Chairman and Managing Partner John Stanton.</p> <p>In addition to the big game, MLB All-Star Week will feature other major events and activities for families and baseball fans around the country to enjoy.</p> <p>Here are all the events confirmed so far:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T-Mobile Home Run Derby • SiriusXM All-Star Futures Game • All-Star Celebrity Softball • Fan events like PLAY BALL Park <p>The team says more information about All-Star week will be released in the near future.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/17 Ukraine clandestine resistance cells
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/17/world/europe/ukraine-partisans-insurgency-russia.html
GIST	<p>ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine — They sneak down darkened alleys to set explosives. They identify Russian targets for Ukrainian artillery and long-range rockets provided by the United States. They blow up rail lines and assassinate Ukrainian officials they consider collaborators with the Russians.</p> <p>Slipping back and forth across the front lines, the guerrilla fighters are known in Ukraine as partisans, and in recent weeks they have taken an ever more prominent role in the war, rattling Russian forces by helping deliver humiliating blows in areas they occupy and thought to be safe.</p> <p>Increasingly, Ukraine is taking the fight against Russian forces into Russian-controlled areas, whether by using elite military units, like the one credited on Tuesday with a huge explosion at a Russian ammunition depot in the occupied Crimean Peninsula, or by deploying an underground network of the partisan guerrillas.</p> <p>Last week, Ukrainian officials said, the partisans had a hand in a successful strike on a Russian air base, also in Crimea, which Moscow annexed eight years ago. It destroyed eight fighter jets.</p> <p>“The goal is to show the occupiers that they are not at home, that they should not settle in, that they should not sleep comfortably,” said one guerrilla fighter, who spoke on condition that, for security reasons, he only be identified by his code name, Svarog, after a pagan Slavic god of fire.</p> <p>In recent days the Ukrainian military made Svarog and several other of the operatives available for interviews in person or online, hoping to highlight the partisans’ widening threat to Russian forces and signal to Western donors that Ukraine is also successfully rallying local resources in the war, now nearly 6 months old. A senior Ukrainian military official familiar with the program also described the workings of the resistance in detail.</p> <p>Their accounts of attacks could not be verified completely but aligned with reports in the Ukrainian media and with the descriptions of Ukrainians who had recently fled Russian-occupied areas.</p> <p>Svarog and I met over lemonade and cheese pastries at a Georgian restaurant in Zaporizhzhia, a city under Ukrainian control about 65 miles north of the occupied town of Melitopol, where he operates.</p> <p>He spoke with intimate knowledge of partisan activities, providing a rare glimpse into one of the most hidden aspects of the war.</p>

The Ukrainian military began training partisans in the months before the invasion, as Russia massed troops near the borders. The effort has paid off in recent weeks as Ukrainian forces are pressing a counteroffensive in the south.

Insurgent activity is now intensifying, as the resistance fighters strike stealthily in environs that they know intimately, using car bombs, booby traps and targeted killings with pistols — and then blending into the local population.

Before the war, Svarog occasionally joined weekend training with Right Sector and National Corps, a branch of the Azov movement, both of which are aligned with paramilitary units in Ukraine. They were just two of dozens of organizations running military training for civilians throughout Ukraine during the eight-year war with Russian-backed separatists.

Svarog said he was among the trainees in these public programs. Behind the scenes, Ukraine's Special Operations Forces were forming a more structured, and secret, program that included instruction on sabotage and explosives and stashing caches of weapons in anticipation of Russia's attack.

After the invasion, Svarog said, he was directed to a cache in a storage shed outside Melitopol, where he found slabs of high explosives, detonators, Kalashnikov rifles, a grenade launcher and two pistols equipped with silencers.

Melitopol, the southern Ukrainian town where Svarog operates, has since emerged as a center of the resistance. He recounted the careful casing of targets, followed by attacks.

By Saturday, partisans had struck with explosives seven days in a row, according to the town's exiled mayor, Ivan Fedorov, who boasted of the achievement to Ukrainian media as part of the more public embrace of partisan operations by officials.

The attacks have been going on for several months. In one attack this spring, Svarog said, he and several members of the cell in Melitopol sneaked through the town at night to booby-trap a car in the parking lot of a Russian-controlled police station.

Carrying wire cutters, tape and fishing line, the fighters moved through courtyards and back alleys to avoid Russian checkpoints.

They first cut an electrical wire, blacking out a streetlight, then dashed quickly into the darkness where they planted a bomb, wrapped in tape with the sticky side facing outward, into a wheel well. The fishing line was taped both to the inside of the wheel and to a detonator, rigging the bomb to explode when the wheel turned.

"Anybody who would drive that car would be a traitor," Svarog said. "Nobody there is keeping public order." The bomb killed one policeman and wounded another.

In a strike last week, he said, his cell booby-trapped the car of Oleg Shostak, a Ukrainian who had joined the Russian political party United Russia in Melitopol. The insurgents targeted him because they suspected him of tailoring propaganda to appeal to local residents.

Svarog, who said he did not take part in this particular mission, said his team placed a bomb under the driver's seat of the car, rigged to explode when the engine started.

Mr. Shostak was wounded in the explosion but survived, said Mr. Fedorov, the exiled mayor of Melitopol. The attack was separately reported by Ukrainian authorities and described by displaced people leaving Melitopol through a checkpoint to Ukrainian territory on Sunday.

Whether targeted people survive or die in the attacks, partisans say, is less important than the signal they send with each strike: You are never safe.

Separately, two partisans operating in occupied southeastern Ukraine and interviewed by video call described a branch of the underground called Yellow Ribbon, which carries out nonviolent actions such as posting leaflets and spray-painting graffiti.

The bases on Ukrainian territory where operatives are trained are moved constantly to avoid discovery, according to a senior Ukrainian military official. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive military information.

Each operative each has a different a role to play, the official said: scouting a target, gathering intelligence on the movements of a target, and carrying out an attack. Individual cells are kept separate and do not know one another, lest a detained partisan reveal identities under interrogation.

Two entities within the military are responsible for overseeing operations behind enemy lines, the official said: the military intelligence service, known as HUR, and Ukraine's Special Operations Forces. An interagency task force oversees the operations of both the intelligence agency and Special Operations Forces branches of the underground, what is known as the Resistance Movement, or Rukh Oporu in Ukrainian.

The official described a poisoning in the Zaporizhzhia region that killed around 15 Russian soldiers and the sabotage of a grain elevator in the Kherson Region that prevented Russian forces from stealing 60,000 tons of grain. Neither operation could be independently verified.

Partisans were also behind an explosion on Saturday that disabled a railroad bridge connecting the city of Melitopol to Crimea, halting the supply of military equipment coming into the Zaporizhzhia region.

"They're frightening people, these Ukrainian partisans," the official said. "But they're frightening only for the occupiers."

And for those the partisans consider to be traitors, too.

The Ukrainian underground in occupied territory considers policemen, municipal and regional government employees and teachers who agree to work under the Russian educational curriculum as collaborators, according to Svarog and another partisan using the nickname Viking, who was interviewed in an online video call. They said they do not see doctors, firefighters and employees of utility companies as traitors.

Teachers are a focus now, with schools scheduled to open in September.

"The Russians want to teach by their program, not the truth," Viking said. "A child is vulnerable to propaganda and if raised in this program, will become an idiot like the Russians," he said. "A teacher who agrees to teach by the Russian program is a collaborator."

Partisans will not attack teachers, he said, but have sought to publicly humiliate them in the leaflets they often post on utility poles with dark warnings for collaborators, as part of the guerrillas' psychological operations.

One went up recently, he said, with the names and photographs of principals planning to open schools in September.

It said simply: "For collaborating with the Russians, there will be payback."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/17 Ukraine defies Russia, strikes Crimea again
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/16/world/europe/crimea-russia-ukraine-explosions.html

ODESA, Ukraine — Russian warships patrol Crimea's coasts and Russian warplanes fly from its territory, transformed by eight years of occupation into a fortress. President Vladimir V. Putin has [called](#) Crimea a "sacred place," Russia's "holy land," and one of his top advisers has [warned](#) that if the peninsula were attacked, Ukraine would face "Judgment Day."

But lately, Ukraine has been calling the Kremlin's bluff. Huge explosions rocked a temporary Russian ammunition depot in Crimea on Tuesday, in the latest in a series of clandestine Ukrainian assaults against the Black Sea peninsula that Mr. Putin illegally annexed in 2014, and that is now being used as a vital staging ground for Russia's invasion.

A senior Ukrainian official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss the operation, said that an elite Ukrainian military unit operating behind enemy lines was responsible for the blasts. Russia's Defense Ministry said in a statement that the episode was an "act of sabotage," a significant acknowledgment that the war is spreading to what the Kremlin considers Russian territory.

The attacks in Crimea underscore Ukraine's [increasingly aggressive military tactics](#), as the government in Kyiv leans on long-range Western weapons and special forces to strike deep behind the front, disrupt Russian supply lines and counter Russia's advantages in matériel. They also represent a growing challenge to Mr. Putin, with Crimea's security key to Russia's military effort — and to Mr. Putin's political standing at home.

No single action that Mr. Putin has taken in his 22-year rule provoked as much pro-Kremlin euphoria among Russians as his largely bloodless annexation of Crimea, an action that cemented his image as a leader resurrecting Russia as a great power.

And in the run-up to the full-scale invasion last winter, it was Crimea that Mr. Putin repeatedly cited as the locus of what he called an existential security threat posed by Ukraine, warning that a Western-backed Ukrainian effort to retake the peninsula by force could trigger a direct war between [Russia and NATO](#).

Until this month, Crimea appeared well protected from Ukrainian attacks. Even Ukraine's most advanced weapons systems do not have the range to hit military targets there, and its planes are incapable of penetrating Russian air defenses on the peninsula.

But in recent weeks, explosions have erupted on the peninsula repeatedly. And on July 31, Russia canceled its Navy Day celebrations in the Crimean port city of Sevastopol after an [attack by a makeshift drone](#) injured six.

Last week, a series of [blasts at a military airfield](#) in southern Crimea wiped out a good portion of the air power and munitions stores of the Black Sea fleet's 43rd naval aviation regiment, and sent beachgoers rushing for cover. That attack, according to a Ukrainian official, was carried out in part by special forces officers working with local partisan fighters.

In the attack on Tuesday, at least two civilians were wounded, and power lines, railroad tracks and homes were damaged in multiple detonations, in the village of Mayskoye, Russian officials said. As many as 3,000 people were evacuated from the area, and local residents in Crimea said that the authorities there had introduced a "yellow level terrorist threat" alert, searching people as they entered parks and public buildings.

An analysis by The New York Times of several photos and videos shows a large fire burning west of Mayskoye, on Tuesday, and a satellite image shows smoke rising from the same site. Videos taken by passers-by before the explosions and verified by The Times show military vehicles parked in the nearby village, including what appear to be mobile multiple rocket launchers emblazoned with the 'Z' Russia uses to identify its forces.

About 11 miles from the location of the explosions, a transformer substation in the town of Dzhankoi was also on fire. The cause was not evident, but it is near another site where hundreds of Russian military vehicles were filmed in the weeks before.

Even before those explosions, there were signs that people on the peninsula, a popular vacation spot, were either being moved or were feeling unsettled enough to leave. A record 38,000 cars on Monday drove in both directions across [the 12-mile bridge](#) linking Crimea and Russia, the state news agency Tass [reported](#).

“The queue these days to leave Crimea for Russia across the bridge proves that the absolute majority of citizens of the terrorist state already understand or at least feel that Crimea is not a place for them,” President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine said in his nightly address.

Ukraine’s leaders have not publicly claimed responsibility for any of the recent blasts, holding to [a policy of official ambiguity](#) about attacks far behind the front lines. But Mr. Zelensky and one of his advisers, Mykhailo Podolyak, appeared to hint at Ukrainian involvement.

“A reminder: Crimea of normal country is about the Black Sea, mountains, recreation and tourism, but Crimea occupied by Russians is about warehouses explosions and high risk of death for invaders and thieves,” Mr. Podolyak [wrote on Twitter](#). “Demilitarization in action.”

Mr. Zelensky praised those helping Ukraine’s intelligence services and special forces, and warned civilians in Russian-held territory to stay away from Russian military installations. “The reasons for the explosions in the occupied territory can be different, very different,” he said, but they all result in damage to Russia’s military.

After Mr. Putin launched his full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, Russian forces lunged north from Crimea and quickly captured a large swath of territory in southern Ukraine, including the Kherson region, which Russian forces almost fully control. Russia is now using Crimea to funnel troops and supplies, and provide air and logistics support to its forces in Kherson and the neighboring Zaporizka region, where Ukraine has been attacking Russian supply lines and threatening a major counteroffensive.

Pavel Luzin, an independent Russian military analyst, said that “Russia’s possibilities on the battlefield are being limited” by Ukraine’s attacks in Crimea.

“It cannot seize the initiative, because there are not enough resources,” he said of the Russian military. “Crimea is the only way to support the grouping of troops in the Kherson and Zaporizka regions. Otherwise, this grouping of troops does not exist.”

Now the question is how Russia responds to the attacks. In April, Russia’s Defense Ministry warned that it would retaliate against future Ukrainian strikes on Russian territory by targeting “decision-making centers” in the capital, Kyiv.

In July, Dmitri A. Medvedev, the vice chairman of Mr. Putin’s security council and former president, said that in the event of an attack from Ukraine against Crimea, “Judgment Day will come for all of them over there at the same time.”

After Tuesday’s blasts, some pro-Kremlin commentators were calling on the military to make good on those threats. Andrei Klishas, a senior lawmaker from Mr. Putin’s United Russia party, said in a social media post that “Russia’s retaliatory strikes must be very convincing.”

“This is about protecting our sovereignty,” he wrote.

But Mr. Putin, who addressed a security conference in Moscow by video link on Tuesday a few hours after the early-morning blasts in Crimea, made no mention of the attack. He said Russia was prepared for a lengthy war, even if many more Ukrainians would die, repeating his frequent argument that a Western-

allied Ukraine was an existential threat to Russia. The West, he claimed in his speech, was using Ukrainians as “cannon fodder” in its conflict with Russia.

“The situation in Ukraine shows that the United States is trying to draw out this conflict,” he said.

With little movement on the battlefield in the last month, the Kremlin has [tried to cement its control over occupied territories](#), attempting to repeat the illegal annexation process it performed in Crimea in 2014, according to Western analysts. Russian forces and their proxies have arrested hundreds, doled out Russian passports, replaced the currency with rubles and rerouted the internet through Russian servers — putting pressure on Ukraine to disrupt that work.

Two explosions in the occupied city of Melitopol knocked out pro-Kremlin television broadcasts on Tuesday, according to the city’s deposed Ukrainian mayor, Ivan Federov. Details about the blasts could not be independently confirmed, and it was not immediately clear who was responsible. But Mr. Federov said the episode emphasized that opposition to the Russian-installed authorities would continue.

“The people of Melitopol are holding out and the resistance forces are neutralizing everything” that the Kremlin-backed regime has imposed, he said.

In addition to reinforcing and defending their positions in southern Ukraine, Russian forces have continued to barrage Ukrainian towns, cities and defensive positions across hundreds of miles in northern and eastern Ukraine.

In the northeastern city of Kharkiv, Russian shells exploded on roads, hit infrastructure and destroyed other buildings in five of the city’s nine districts, according to Ihor Terekhov, the city’s mayor.

He said it had been “a long time” since Russian forces had hit so many different parts of the city at once. The number of casualties was still being assessed.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/17 Russia court fines popular rock star
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/08/17/world/ukraine-russia-news-war#a-court-in-russia-fines-one-of-the-countrys-biggest-rock-stars-for-criticizing-the-war
GIST	<p>A Russian court on Tuesday fined a longtime rock star who had condemned the war during a concert in May and questioned whether the veneration of President Vladimir V. Putin constituted true patriotism.</p> <p>The court that heard the case is in the city of Ufa, where the concert took place. In a statement, the court said that the star, Yuri Shevchuk, 65, the frontman of the band DDT, had been fined \$815 for making a “speech that contained public calls to prevent the use of Russian armed forces.”</p> <p>A resident of St. Petersburg, Mr. Shevchuk did not appear in court, but published a statement through his lawyer saying that he “has always been against wars in any countries at any time.”</p> <p>“I believe that all problems and political difficulties between countries must be solved diplomatically,” he said.</p> <p>In Ufa in May, Mr. Shevchuk said onstage before a packed stadium that people in Ukraine were dying just to fulfill “some kind of Napoleonic plans of another Caesar.”</p> <p>He added, “The motherland, my friends, is not” a part of the president’s body “that you have to lick and kiss all the time. The motherland is a poor grandmother selling potatoes at the train station.” The crowd clapped and cheered.</p> <p>After the concert, law enforcement officers came to Mr. Shevchuk’s dressing room and began a legal process against him, he said in an interview with a popular YouTube blogger, Katya Gordeeva, in July.</p>

	<p>One of the biggest rock stars of his generation, Mr. Shevchuk first came under government scrutiny in the 1980s, during the Soviet era. In that period, his band's concerts were canceled, and he was forced to move from one city to another.</p> <p>Following the Soviet collapse, Mr. Shevchuk continued to criticize the authorities, calling for peace and giving concerts in Chechnya, which sought independence from Moscow. In 2010, Mr. Shevchuk publicly challenged Mr. Putin over the lack of freedom in Russia.</p> <p>Following the concert in Ufa, the authorities began canceling his concerts again.</p> <p>"They took away our work, an important essential work," Mr. Shevchuk said in the July interview. "They took away our chance to give back to our country."</p> <p>At the start of the war in Ukraine, the Russian government enacted a sweeping law that effectively bans all criticism of the invasion. One result was that popular artists who spoke against the war — not a small number — had to flee the country. Others have seen their concerts canceled.</p> <p>"I wanted to say that Russians are not slaves," Mr. Shevchuk said in the July interview. "We are under occupation," he said. "We are being shot and bombed by propaganda."</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/16 Revealed: secret powers of an Australia PM
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/16/world/australia/scott-morrison-minister.html
GIST	<p>SYDNEY, Australia — Most Australians are proud of their Westminster model of parliamentary democracy, in which ministers are empowered to decide how wide swaths of the government operate. Preferring a collaborative politics, they abhor the centralized pomp and power of the American presidency — which is exactly why revelations this week about the country's Trump-friendly former prime minister have unleashed a volcano of criticism.</p> <p>Turns out, the blustery leader that Australia chose to evict from office in May, Scott Morrison, had elevated himself to new heights. After Covid arrived in March of 2020, he wasn't just the prime minister. He swore himself in as a second health minister, finance minister, resources minister and home affairs minister, along with appointing himself co-treasurer. And he kept his new roles a secret from the public and most of his colleagues in Parliament.</p> <p>"I cannot conceive of the mind-set that has created this," said Anthony Albanese, the current prime minister, who stood before reporters on Tuesday to reveal new details about the five jobs Mr. Morrison decided he was capable of managing in addition to his own.</p> <p>"It's undermined our democracy," Mr. Albanese added.</p> <p>The baffling arrangement apparently began with Mr. Morrison's realization in 2020 that his government's declaration of a "human biosecurity emergency" would give the health minister extraordinary powers to direct any citizen in the country to do anything to control the spread of Covid-19. The laws of public health essentially put the health minister above the prime minister.</p> <p>So, according to a new book excerpted in the newspaper The Australian, Mr. Morrison and the country's attorney general, Christian Porter, came up with an administrative workaround. Finding there was no constitutional block on having two ministers in charge of the same portfolio, Mr. Morrison promptly appointed himself health minister, then finance minister, to make sure he could also have a say over emergency spending.</p> <p>On Tuesday, amid rising calls for him to resign his parliamentary seat, Mr. Morrison said his power play had been the "right decision" for "very unconventional times."</p>

Less clear was why in the 14 months that followed Covid's arrival, he added more responsibilities. But one anecdote offers a hint: Before the election in May, he used his new ministerial powers to overrule the resources minister, Keith Pitt, on a contentious gas project, killing it off over concerns that it could hurt his party's chances at the polls.

"This was the only matter I involved myself directly with in this or any other department," Mr. Morrison said in a statement on Tuesday, apologizing "for any offense to my colleagues."

What hurt Australians most, perhaps, was the gut punch of what Mr. Albanese called "government by deception." Traditionally, prime ministers who want to seize control of a portfolio fire the minister and hire another to follow the party line. In the case of the resources role — as with the other self-appointments — Mr. Morrison did not disclose to the public that he had simply given himself an extra lever of control over decision-making.

The governor general, the representative of Queen Elizabeth II, officially Australia's head of state, also said nothing through the entire period, after providing a rubber-stamp approval of Mr. Morrison's appointments.

Several ministers who were sharing power with Mr. Morrison were never told, including the finance minister at the time, Mathias Cormann, who currently serves as secretary general of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, known as the O.E.C.D.

Another senior lawmaker, Karen Andrews, who had served as the minister of home affairs, said she had "no idea" about the move until this week.

On Tuesday, she called for Mr. Morrison's resignation. "There can be no justification for why this was not publicly revealed," she said.

Many Australians were equally appalled, seeing Mr. Morrison's moves as decidedly Trumpian.

Some analysts argued that the revelations confirmed voters' suspicions about their recently ousted leader.

"At some point, perhaps several points, between 2019 and 2022, voters turned hard on Morrison," said Jill Sheppard, a political scientist at the Australian National University. "While this decision by Morrison to massively undermine parliamentary convention and even arguably the Constitution was kept quiet, to me this shows how well Australian voters can smell a rat."

As evidence, she cited postelection surveys of voters showing that more than any policy or issue, disdain for Mr. Morrison — who was often described by voters as dishonest — cost his coalition the election.

And the current prime minister, Mr. Albanese, seemed eager to hammer the point home. On Tuesday, three months after taking office, he described the previous government's moves as an "unprecedented trashing of our democracy."

Jason Bosland, a professor at Melbourne Law School, noted that the trouble went beyond Mr. Morrison, to the way Australian government works. The Westminster system may require shared responsibility, but it does not prioritize information sharing for public oversight.

"We have a lack of legal mechanisms for accountability and transparency embedded in the law," Professor Bosland said. "And we have a growing culture of secrecy in government."

Mr. Albanese was asked repeatedly by reporters on Tuesday what he planned to do about the systemic issues that Mr. Morrison's actions seemed to reveal. Transparency problems [have been getting worse for years](#), with the prosecution of whistle-blowers, raids on journalists' homes, suppression orders that keep court proceedings private, and a persistent rejection of public records requests.

	The prime minister had little to say about that. “We will get proper advice, then we will have proper deliberations,” he said, without committing to legislation. “We are going to run a proper government.”
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/16 Climate, health bill signed into law
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/16/us/politics/biden-climate-health-bill.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — President Biden signed into law a landmark tax, health and energy bill on Tuesday that takes significant steps toward fulfilling his goal to modernize the American economy and reduce its dependence on fossil fuels.</p> <p>The vast legislation will lower prescription drug costs for seniors on Medicare, extend federal subsidies for health insurance and reduce the federal deficit. It will also help electric utilities switch to lower-emission sources of energy and encourage Americans to buy electric vehicles through tax credits.</p> <p>What it does not do, however, is provide workers with many of the other sweeping economic changes that Mr. Biden pledged would help Americans earn more and enjoy the comforts of a middle-class life.</p> <p>Mr. Biden signed the bill, which Democrats call the Inflation Reduction Act, in the State Dining Room at the White House. He and his allies cast the success of the legislation as little short of a miracle, given it required more than a year of intense negotiations among congressional Democrats. In his remarks, Mr. Biden proclaimed victory as he signed a compromise bill that he called “the biggest step forward on climate ever” and “a godsend to many families” struggling with prescription drug costs.</p> <p>“The bill I’m about to sign is not just about today; it’s about tomorrow. It’s about delivering progress and prosperity to American families,” Mr. Biden said.</p> <p>Administration officials say Mr. Biden has passed far more of his economic agenda than they could have possibly hoped for, given Republican opposition to much of his agenda on taxes and spending and razor-thin Democratic majorities in the House and Senate. His wins include a \$1.9 trillion economic rescue plan last year designed to get workers and businesses through the pandemic and a pair of bipartisan bills aimed at American competitiveness: a \$1 trillion infrastructure bill and \$280 billion in spending to spur domestic semiconductor manufacturing and counter China.</p> <p>But there is little dispute that Mr. Biden has been unable to persuade lawmakers to go along with one of his biggest economic goals: investing in workers, families, students and other people.</p> <p>Both parts of the equation — modernizing the physical backbone of the economy and empowering its workers — are crucial for Mr. Biden’s vision for how a more assertive federal government can speed economic growth and ensure its spoils are widely shared.</p> <p>In a warming world with increased economic competition from sometimes adversarial nations, Mr. Biden considers investment in low-emission energy sources and advanced manufacturing critical to American businesses and the nation’s economic health.</p> <p>Mr. Biden also sees human investment as crucial. The American economy remains dominated by service industries like restaurants and medicine. Its recovery from the pandemic recession has been stunted, in part, by breakdowns in support for some of the workers who should be powering those industries’ revival. The cost and availability of child care alone is keeping many potential workers sidelined, leading to an abundance of unfilled job openings and costing business owners money.</p> <p>Yet Mr. Biden has so far been unable to deliver on many of the programs he proposed to help Americans balance work responsibilities with care for children or aging parents, and to pursue high-quality education from a young age. He could not secure universal prekindergarten or free community college tuition. He could not find support to fund child care subsidies or to extend a tax credit meant to fight child poverty.</p>

And his plans to spend hundreds of billions of dollars to expand and improve home health services for seniors and disabled people have also foundered.

Those omissions add up to what liberal economists call a missed opportunity to help Americans work more and earn more, and to make the economy run more efficiently.

Mr. Biden has had more success in getting Democrats, and some Republicans, to invest in the physical economy and to embrace a more interventionist view of federal power, said Lindsay Owens, executive director of the liberal Groundwork Collaborative in Washington. By embracing industrial policy and government-induced emissions reduction, she said, “He’s moved to an economic system and an economic agenda where the government is really throwing its weight around, putting its thumb on the scale,” she said.

But, she added, “we didn’t get the care agenda. That’s a huge miss. Until we get affordable child care, our economy’s not going to be at full strength.”

In Congress, that agenda, which Mr. Biden largely packed into his “American Families Plan,” always faced a much rockier path than the competitiveness efforts in his “American Jobs Plan.” It had almost no support from Republicans, ruling out the bipartisan path that delivered Mr. Biden wins on infrastructure, research and development and domestic manufacturing. And it ran into problems with some Senate Democrats, including Joe Manchin III of West Virginia, who pushed early for Mr. Biden to limit the size and scope of what morphed into the bill Mr. Biden signed Tuesday.

Opposition from another critical Senate Democrat, Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, [forced Mr. Biden to drop](#) much of what he promised would be an overhaul of the tax code to “reward work, not wealth.” He did not, as he repeatedly proposed, end up raising top marginal income tax rates for high earners, or taxing investment returns for millionaires at the same set of rates as income earned from wages, which he had promised would help reduce economic inequality.

The legislation he signed Tuesday is projected to increase taxes by about \$300 billion, largely by imposing new levies on big corporations. The law includes a [new tax on certain corporate stock repurchases](#) and [a minimum tax](#) on large firms that use deductions and other methods to reduce their tax bills. It also bolsters funding for the Internal Revenue Service in an effort to crack down on tax evasion and collect potentially hundreds of billions of dollars that are owed to the government but not paid by high earners and corporations.

Those increases represent only a small slice of the [tax revenue from corporations](#) and high earners that Mr. Biden [initially offered to fund his agenda](#).

“On the tax side, the president fell far short of his promises,” said Steve Rosenthal, a senior fellow in the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center in Washington. “On the other hand, what he did accomplish was substantial.”

Ben Harris, [a campaign economic aide](#) to Mr. Biden who is now the assistant secretary for economic policy in the Treasury Department, said the increased I.R.S. enforcement against tax evasion by high earners and corporations would by itself help balance the tax system in favor of workers.

“The work-not-wealth emphasis was obviously central to his campaign,” Mr. Harris said, “and across the various policies ranging from tax enforcement to the book minimum tax to stock buybacks, the president got a lot of wins out of this bill.”

Other officials defend Mr. Biden’s achievements, which include securing some long-promised programs that are popular with voters but struggle to pass in Washington, like reducing prescription drug costs and improving infrastructure. They note the bills he has signed have sought to use federal purchasing power to drive up wages and promote unionization.

“Every piece of the puzzle is designed in a way to empower workers, empower individuals across the country to make a good living wage,” said Stefanie Feldman, the policy director for Mr. Biden’s 2020 campaign who is now a deputy assistant to the president and senior adviser to the domestic policy adviser.

The bill Mr. Biden signed Tuesday invests \$370 billion in spending and tax credits in low-emission forms of energy to fight climate change. It is aimed at helping the United States cut greenhouse gas emissions by [an estimated 40 percent](#) below 2005 levels by 2030. That would put the country within striking distance of Mr. Biden’s goal of cutting emissions at least 50 percent over that time period.

It extends federal health insurance subsidies, allows the government to negotiate prescription drug prices for seniors on Medicare and is expected to reduce the federal budget deficit by about \$300 billion over 10 years. Administration officials call the health components crucial to millions of workers, and they say the climate components will create high-paying union jobs in an emerging clean-energy economy.

But the climate provision is also instructive for what Mr. Biden has been unable to deliver. Mr. Biden called on Congress to create a [civilian climate corps](#) — what he described in his American Jobs Plan outline as a \$10 billion effort to create “the next generation of conservation and resilience workers.”

Patterned after the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s, which put more than three million men to work building roads and parks, cutting trails and planting trees across the country, the re-envisioned climate work force was part of a bill that passed the House in November.

It was a direct investment in workers. And after Mr. Manchin walked away from that package and negotiations restarted this year on a new agreement, it was left on the cutting-room floor.

But Mr. Manchin, who hails from a coal state, signed on to a broad swath of other climate provisions. On Tuesday, Mr. Manchin stood behind Mr. Biden as he signed the bill and the president nodded to his crucial role in getting the compromise package passed into law.

“Joe,” Mr. Biden said, “I never had a doubt.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Heat returns to Pacific Northwest
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/16/us/heat-wave-pacific-northwest.html
GIST	<p>The Pacific Northwest is facing another summer heat spike, with temperatures likely to rise into the triple digits this week across parts of the region and in Northern California.</p> <p>Heat advisories from the National Weather Service have been issued for Wednesday and into the weekend. The Pacific Northwest is one of the few remaining parts of the United States where many buildings are not air-conditioned, increasing the risk of heat-related illnesses.</p> <p>Widespread 90-plus temperatures are expected across central and eastern Washington and Oregon and in northern Idaho this week. Highs could reach the 100s in some areas, especially in the valleys of the Cascade Mountains in Washington state.</p> <p>Overnight lows will also be warm, making it harder for the human body to cool down and potentially increasing the risk of health issues. Forecasters say the heat wave will last into the weekend.</p> <p>In California, higher-than-average temperatures are expected throughout the week in the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys, with a heat advisory in effect at least through Friday night.</p> <p>The worst of the heat will be on Tuesday and Wednesday, with highs that could reach 109 degrees in the Sacramento Valley and 106 in the foothills — seven to 15 degrees above normal for this time of year, according to the Weather Service.</p>

	Temperatures will remain above average for the rest of the week, but the chances of triple-digit heat will be lower on Friday and over the weekend.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/16 Wind energy boom, golden eagles collide
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Wind-energy-boom-and-golden-eagles-collide-in-the-17378620.php
GIST	<p>CODY, Wyo. (AP) — The rush to build wind farms to combat climate change is colliding with preservation of one of the U.S. West’s most spectacular predators — the golden eagle — as the species teeters on the edge of decline.</p> <p>Ground zero in the conflict is Wyoming, a stronghold for golden eagles that soar on 7-foot (2-meter) wings and a favored location for wind farms. As wind turbines proliferate, scientists say deaths from collisions could drive down golden eagle numbers considered stable at best.</p> <p>Yet climate change looms as a potentially greater threat: Rising temperatures are projected to reduce golden eagle breeding ranges by more than 40% later this century, according to a National Audubon Society analysis.</p> <p>That leaves golden eagles doubly vulnerable — to the shifting climate and to the wind energy promoted as a solution to that warming world.</p> <p>“We have some of the best golden eagle populations in Wyoming, but it doesn’t mean the population is not at risk,” said Bryan Bedrosian, conservation director at the Teton Raptor Center in Wilson, Wyoming. “As we increase wind development across the U.S., that risk is increasing.”</p> <p>Turbines blades hundreds of feet long are among myriad threats to golden eagles, which are routinely shot, poisoned by lead, hit by vehicles and electrocuted on power lines.</p> <p>The tenuous position of golden eagles contrasts with the conservation success of their avian cousins, bald eagles, whose numbers have quadrupled since 2009. There are an estimated 346,000 bald eagles in the U.S., versus about 40,000 golden eagles, which need much larger areas to survive and are more inclined to have trouble with humans.</p> <p>Federal officials have tried to curb turbine deaths, while avoiding any slowdown in the growth of wind power as an alternative to carbon-emitting fossil fuels — a key piece of President Joe Biden's climate agenda.</p> <p>In April, a Florida-based power company pleaded guilty in federal court in Wyoming to criminal violations of wildlife protection laws after its wind turbines killed more than 100 golden eagles in eight states. It was the third conviction of a major wind company for killing eagles in a decade.</p> <p>Despite the deaths, scientists like Bedrosian say more turbines are needed to fight climate change. He and colleague Charles Preston are finding ways wind companies can reduce or offset eagle deaths, such as building in areas less frequented by the birds, improving habitat elsewhere or retrofitting power poles to make them less perilous when eagles land.</p> <p>“It’s robbing Peter to pay Paul, but it’s a start and I think it’s the way to go,” Preston said. “It’s a societal question: Is there room for them and us? It’s not just golden eagles. They are kind of a window into the bigger picture.”</p> <p>—</p> <p>Dangling from a rope 30 feet (9 meters) above the ground with a canvas bag slung around his neck, Bedrosian shouldered his way into a golden eagle nest lodged in a cliff ledge in northwestern Wyoming. As an adult eagle circled in the distance, the scientist made an awkward grab for the young eagle in the nest, slid a leather hood over its head then wrestled the bird into the bag.</p>

The 6-week-old bird was lowered and carefully extracted by Preston, a zip tie around its feet as a precaution against talons more than an inch long.

“The key is not to forget later to cut the zip tie,” Bedrosian said.

The eaglet went on a scale — about 7 pounds (3.2 kilograms). Bedrosian drew some blood from a wing to test for lead exposure, and Preston clamped onto each leg a metal band with numbers for identification if the eagle's recaptured or found dead.

Golden eagles don't mate until about 5 years old and produce about one chick every two years, so adult eagle deaths have outsized impacts on the population, Bedrosian said.

Illegal shootings are the biggest cause of death, killing about 700 golden eagles annually, according to federal estimates. More than 600 die annually in collisions with cars, wind turbines and power lines; about 500 annually are electrocuted and more than 400 are poisoned.

“Wind mortality wasn't a thing for golden eagles 10 years ago,” Bedrosian said. “I don't want to pick on wind as the only thing. ... But it's the additive nature of all these things and several are increasing. Vehicle strikes are increasing. Climate change is increasing. Wind is increasing.”

Federal officials won't divulge how many eagles are reported killed by wind farms, saying it's sensitive law enforcement information. The recent criminal prosecution of a subsidiary of NextEra Energy, one of the largest U.S. renewable energy providers, offered a glimpse into the problem's scope.

The company pleaded guilty to three counts of violating the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and was ordered to pay more than \$8 million in fines and restitution after killing at least 150 eagles — including more than 100 goldens at wind farms in Wyoming, California, New Mexico, North Dakota, Colorado, Michigan, Arizona and Illinois.

Government officials said the mortality was likely higher because some turbines killed multiple eagles and carcasses are not always found.

Prosecutors said the company's failure to take steps to protect eagles or to obtain permits to kill the birds gave it an advantage over competitors that did take such steps — even as NextEra and affiliates received hundreds of millions of dollars in federal tax credits for wind power.

The company remained defiant after the plea deal: NextEra President Rebecca Kujawa said bird collisions with turbines were unavoidable accidents that should not be criminalized.

Utilities Duke Energy and PacifiCorp previously pleaded guilty to similar charges in Wyoming. North Carolina-based Duke Energy was sentenced in 2013 to \$1 million in fines and restitution and five years probation following deaths of 14 golden eagles and 149 other birds at two of the company's wind projects.

A year later, Oregon-based PacifiCorp received \$2.5 million in fines and five years probation after 38 golden eagle carcasses and 336 other protected birds were discovered at two of its sites.

The number of wind turbines nationwide more than doubled over the past decade to almost 72,000, according to U.S. Geological Survey data, with development overlapping prime golden eagle territory in states including Wyoming, Montana, California, Washington and Oregon.

USGS scientists concluded in a recent study that if anticipated growth in wind energy by 2040 occurs, increased turbine-caused deaths could cut golden eagle populations by almost half over 10 years.

However, the fact that no population-wide declines have been seen in recent years suggests some uncertainty in the projections. said lead author Jay Diffendorfer.

Federal wildlife officials are pushing wind companies to enroll in a permitting program that allows them to kill eagles if the deaths are offset.

Companies with permits can pay utilities to retrofit power poles, so lines are spaced far enough that eagles can't be easily electrocuted. Every 11 poles retrofitted typically means one eagle death avoided annually.

Nationwide, 34 permits in place last year authorized companies to “take” 170 golden eagles — meaning that many birds could be killed by turbines or lost through impacts on nests or habitat.

For each loss, companies are responsible for ensuring at least one eagle death is avoided somewhere else. Using conservative estimates that overcount potential deaths could even mean a gain of eagles in the long run, said Brian Millsap, who heads the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s eagle program.

“This sounds crass but its realistic. Eagles are going to be incidentally killed at wind farms,” he said. “We’ve got to reduce other things that will allow wind energy development.”

Agency officials would not disclose which companies hold permits. An Associated Press public records review shows most are wind farms.

Federal officials collect golden eagle death data through an online reporting system used by government agencies, companies, scientists, tribes and private groups.

Fish and Wildlife Service officials declined to release the data because they said it could be used in future law enforcement cases.

The nests where Bedrosian and Preston are doing population studies are about 60 miles (96 kilometers) from the nearest wind farm — 114 turbines that PacifiCorp began operating about two years ago near the Wyoming-Montana border.

Personnel on site scan the skies with binoculars for eagles and can shut down turbines when the birds approach.

“We tend to see more golden eagles in prairie areas where you’re going to have the best wind regimes,” said Travis Brown, a biologist with PacifiCorp. “It’s almost like competition for the wind resource because the birds are using it for movement.”

Ten PacifiCorp wind farms have permits authorizing the incidental killing of eagles and an application is pending for two more, the company said.

Company representatives declined to say how many eagles have died under its federal permits. They said PacifiCorp's been building a “bank” of retrofitted power poles to offset eagle deaths and also wants to try new approaches such as painting turbine blades to be more visible and easier to avoid.

“We’re working as hard as we can to avoid and minimize (deaths) up front, and then anything we can’t we’re mitigating on the back end,” Brown said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Seattle approves police hiring incentives
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/to-boost-police-hiring-seattle-city-council-approves-more-incentives/
GIST	The Seattle City Council signed onto Mayor Bruce Harrell’s police hiring and incentive plan Tuesday, offering hiring bonuses of up to \$30,000 to new officers.

Harrell introduced a [plan to hire an additional 500 officers](#) in the next five years by aggressively recruiting police to a department that has lost 460 officers in the past three years, calling the department “depleted and demoralized” at current staffing levels.

This summer the department has around 950 sworn staff members, compared to around 1,300 in 2013-19. Harrell wants to bring the department to 1,450, in response to an increase in [certain crimes in the city](#).

The council voted Tuesday to approve much of Harrell’s incentive plan and allow the Seattle Police Department to spend another \$289,000 on hiring bonuses in 2022, in addition to the [over \\$1 million approved for the same purpose](#) in May.

Councilmember Lisa Herbold, who sponsored the bill, said the city needs to continue to “right-size” the roles of sworn officers, providing alternative responses for situations involving, for example, mental health crises and homelessness, but also ensure a well-staffed department that allows sworn officers to be effective.

“Being a first responder is a difficult job, and we should not make it an impossible job,” Herbold said.

The funds will come from the department’s “salary savings,” money budgeted to pay police staff in 2022 that has gone unspent because the department has not filled the positions.

That money will include \$30,000 hiring bonuses for lateral hires from other departments and \$7,500 bonuses for new recruits. The program would sunset at the end of 2024.

[Most SPD officers currently earn between about](#) \$83,000 and \$109,000 before overtime, bonuses or other additional pay. The incentives will not apply to rehires who left the department less than two years ago. Anyone who leaves the department after less than five years will have to repay the incentive.

Harrell said in a statement Tuesday that “hiring incentives are but one piece” of the administration’s recruitment plan, but are necessary to “demonstrate our urgency and dedication to staying competitive with departments across our region.”

The council bill also takes \$228,000 out of the salary savings to establish four new recruiter positions under the city’s Human Resources Department.

Members of the public rebuffed the idea during public comments at Tuesday’s council meeting, chastising the council for continuing to fund and incentivize SPD despite [promises in 2020 to reduce department funding](#) and invest in communities.

“Don’t throw good money after bad to prop up a police organization that has shown time and again that it’s unable to keep us safe,” Seattle resident Matt Offenbacher said, joining other community members in calling for the council to instead invest in police alternatives.

“It’s long past time to put some urgency and some serious funding behind alternative crisis responses,” he added.

Councilmembers Tammy Morales, Teresa Mosqueda and Kshama Sawant voted against the bill, similarly questioning the investment.

“When we have scarce public resources, we should be allocating them in a way that truly addresses our public challenges. And we know that we have a lot of challenges in the city, and they are things that won’t be solved by the police,” Morales said of the city’s efforts to curtail homelessness and provide affordable housing and behavioral health resources.

The Downtown Seattle Association praised the plan in a statement on Tuesday, calling it “a welcome acknowledgment” of public safety needs.

	<p>“Downtown workers, residents, businesses and visitors deserve to feel safe and secure and enacting this plan is a fundamental step in the right direction. In the meantime, city leaders must stay focused on addressing the immediate safety concerns of our city,” the statement reads.</p> <p>Harrell’s full hiring plan includes prioritizing the recruitment of candidates with diverse backgrounds and language skills; reimbursing new hires’ application fees, travel expenses, and relocation costs; and expanding recruitment messaging to reach candidates locally and nationally.</p> <p>The administration says it will also explore ways to offer tuition assistance to officers and to “create a pipeline of potential recruits through local colleges and universities.”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/16 Suicide rates among Black youth rising
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/community/facing-race/why-black-suicide-rates-going-up-mental-health/281-c29f6369-7fe5-4274-92e7-c61c5f2e39b3
GIST	<p>Seattle - The impact of racial unrest over the past few years has taken a significant mental health toll, especially on the Black community.</p> <p>Data from the American Medical Association shows suicide rates have sharply increased, especially among young Black people.</p> <p>In the past two decades, suicide attempts for Black males between 12 and 18 have increased by 79.7% making Black children and teens almost twice as likely to die by suicide than white children, according to the Journal of the American Medical Association.</p> <p>And it's not just children at risk. Data shows the suicide rate for Black adults increased by 30% between 2014 and 2019.</p> <p>However, data shows Black Americans are also less likely to seek out mental health help. Advocates say it's vital to address the stigma around reaching out for help.</p> <p>'Your ancestors dealt with worse'</p> <p>When Richard Taylor was 10 years old, he attempted to cut fat off of his body with a knife.</p> <p>“I was like, what, maybe if I could just cut some of the fat off of my body, like it would help me it would change, you know, my physical appearance to where my peers wouldn't bully me anymore,” said Taylor.</p> <p>When his parents came home, Taylor said they didn’t understand the severity of how he was feeling.</p> <p>“It was minimized. It was shut down from the standpoint of, 'you're too young to be dealing with this' right, or, you know, 'your ancestors dealt with worse',” said Taylor- now a motivational speaker and author.</p> <p>As Taylor grew up, outwardly he appeared to grow out of some of his problems.</p> <p>“I was a standout quarterback in the city of Chicago playing football. Scholarship offers galore,” said Taylor. “Every time I felt, you know, an immense amount of mental or emotional turmoil, like, you know, I even that out with some kind of physical pain.”</p> <p>Ten years later, Taylor's emotional pain led him to turn to self-harm again.</p> <p>“That day, I just kind of was at my wit's end. That led me to a decision to take a blade down my wrist five times,” said Taylor.</p>

Now the word "love" is tattooed over the scar.

Protests over racial inequality and PTSD

Omari Salisbury understands how easy it can be for a person to get to a breaking point with their mental health.

During the summer of 2020, Salisbury, the owner of [Converge Media](#), was on the ground in nearly every Seattle protest following the murder of George Floyd.

He witnessed the unrest, the attacks and the violence firsthand. Salisbury was covering protestors on I-5 when a car drove straight into the group.

"I remember it vividly, a car entering the empty freeway, going around the barricaded cars, ran right into a group of protestors, [killing Summer Taylor](#) and critically injuring Diaz Love," said Salisbury.

The trauma of that scene combined with months of social unrest pushed Salisbury to his mental limits.

Salisbury made a difficult decision, in order to take care of his mental health, he stepped away from covering the protests to focus on himself and his community.

"So many people walk around with so much pain and so much trauma and so much hurt," Salisbury said. "Let me help you connect the dots. Let me do my part ... that's what I wanna do."

Black Americans less likely to seek help

Black Americans experience mental health issues at a rate similar to their white counterparts, but according to the [American Psychological Association](#) (APA), they are less likely to seek help.

"[Help] is often thought of as actually being a weakness," said Dr. Devin Byrd, a trained psychologist, and president of Bastyr University. "Black men, historically ... there's been a lot of pressure in terms of presenting oneself as being strong and not needing outside help or assistance."

Taylor said it was an attitude that, growing up, applied to everyone.

"A lot of times, it wasn't discussed, you know, we could just simply say, oh, 'that's just crazy Uncle Billy over there', right, but not realizing that crazy Uncle Billy, like really needs help, right?" Taylor said.

Another barrier to seeking help is a lack of representation. Eighty-four percent of psychologists are white. Four percent are Black, according to the APA.

"We need more therapists of color. We need more individuals who are able to resonate with and understand the experiences of communities of color," said Byrd.

"My father and I have a phenomenal relationship. But like, he didn't really understand it," said Taylor.

After Taylor's last suicide attempt in his dorm room, he was able to get into therapy.

Through his work, he says he hopes to shatter the stigma around mental health treatment that is crushing so many Black families in silence.

"We have so many of us living in silence. And unfortunately, if we live in silence for too long, we can make a decision to where we're not here anymore." Taylor said.

[Return to Top](#)

SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/king-county-child-care-workers-one-time-retention-bonus/281-4628754f-7d0a-49fc-a530-1cda086ce326
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Over 12,000 child care providers in King County are expected to receive one-time payments for retention bonuses.</p> <p>Nearly 90% of eligible licensed child care providers in King County applied for the one-time payment that will be starting in August through September, according to a release. The bonus will range from \$400-500 per child care worker.</p> <p>In June, King County and the city of Seattle announced \$7 million in funding earmarked for child care retention payments. King County contributed \$5 million through its "Best Starts for Kids" levy, while the city of Seattle added \$2.4 million from its JumpStart Payroll Expense tax.</p> <p>"Child care workers are essential to a healthy, thriving region, providing critical services to families and communities every day," said King County Executive Dow Constantine. "We are committed to access to affordable child care and respectful wages for child care workers, and these investments provide the necessary support to ensure both. We're grateful for our partnership with Mayor Harrell and the City of Seattle and will continue to collaborate on ways we can invest in this workforce."</p> <p>Donny Willeto, development director for Child Resources, said in June the bonus applied to every child care worker on payroll, regardless of full or part-time status. Willeto said all King County licensed programs - from birth to 12th grade - along with licensed child care programs were eligible for bonuses.</p> <p>A release from King County said child care workers make \$9 less per hour than median workers, making them among the lowest wage earners in Washington state.</p> <p>Child care workers are more likely to be women and people of color, the two groups who faced the highest risk of COVID-19 exposure during the pandemic, the release said.</p> <p>"Through the most challenging and unpredictable of circumstances, child care workers stepped up during the pandemic to support our city's children and families," said Mayor Bruce Harrell. "It is our turn to show up for them. To reach our vision for <i>One Seattle</i>, we must build a sustainable future where families have access to high-quality, affordable care, and providers can earn a thriving wage that reflects the value they provide to our economy. We will get to that future only through strong partnerships built on respect, trust, and collaboration with the child care community."</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/16 Fire danger mounts for WA counties
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/weather/red-flag-warning-issued-for-fire-danger
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — The forecast this week calls for very hot and dry conditions across many areas of the state, prompting the National Weather Service to issue new fire warnings for much of Western Washington.</p> <p>The Red Flag warning starts Wednesday at 11 a.m. and extends through 10 p.m. Thursday.</p> <p>"Fire by its very nature is extremely unpredictable," said Ryan Rodruck, with the Washington Department of Natural Resources.</p> <p>Just in the last week, brush fires have popped up near South Center in King County when very dry brush along the highway ignited.</p> <p>"As long as we continue to see some of these rises in temperatures, that fuel is going to get hotter and that fuel is going to get dryer," Rodruck said.</p> <p>"King County is in a Stage 1 burn ban, which essentially means no land debris burning," said Sara Ferguson, with the Renton Regional Fire Authority.</p>

Pierce County has issued a county-wide burn ban that is currently in effect for all of unincorporated parts of the county.

The Red Flag warning covers those counties along with Thurston, Lewis, Snohomish, Skagit, Whatcom, Cowlitz and Skamania, from Wednesday morning to Thursday night.

"Things are starting to dry out," Ferguson said. "It doesn't take much now for something to quickly ignite, which is a little frightening."

"We don't do our bonfires anymore or make sure that there's anything outside any gas cans or anything like that," said Holly Lawrence, who lives on four acres in Pierce County.

She said the fire, along State Highway 410 in September 2020, hit so close to home that she and her neighbors all became more diligent about fires.

"We live in kind of a smaller neighborhood down a dirt road where everybody knows everybody and so if there's any type of fire within the five or six houses there," Lawrence said. "Everybody's calling like they don't burn any outside fires or anything like that."

Experts say a tossed cigarette butt, a spark from tow chains, a hot muffler parked over dry grass or a campfire or debris fire that spreads is enough to ignite a massive wildfire that can quickly grow out of control.

"It really is up to all of us to try to help in wildfire prevention," Rodruck said. "Not only are you keeping yourself and your property safe, but you're also ensuring the safety of our firefighters."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Homebuyers backing out of deal new high
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/housing-market-number-of-washington-homebuyers-backing-out-of-deals-reaches-new-high
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — The housing market is slowing as higher mortgage rates sideline many prospective homebuyers.</p> <p>According to Redfin, nationwide, roughly 63,000 home-purchase agreements fell through in July, equal to 16.1% of homes that went under contract that month.</p> <p>In Washington, Seattle saw 11% of pending sales fall through in July 2022, in Tacoma the percentage of buyers backing out of deals was 17.2%.</p> <p>"I noticed Tacoma had a higher share of homes falling out than Seattle," Daryl Fairweather, the Chief Economist at Redfin said. "I think Tacoma was the most competitive and when the housing market and interest rates rise, the higher the competitiveness becomes and there is more that can fall."</p> <p>Data showed that's the highest percentage on record with the exception of March and April 2020, when the onset of the coronavirus pandemic brought the housing market to a near standstill.</p> <p>"The only time we saw more people backing out of deals other than this time was right when the pandemic hit," Fairweather said. "They didn't know what was going to happen, if they could go to work, or if the economy would continue to function."</p> <p>Redfin said today's buyers are more likely to utilize contract contingencies that allow them to back out without financial penalty if something goes wrong. And with an increasing number of homes to choose from, they're also more likely to call a deal off if a seller refuses to bring the price down or make</p>

	<p>requested repairs—a situation that has become increasingly common given that sellers are still adjusting to the cooling market.</p> <p>“As a buyer, I think that you should know that when you negotiate upfront, the buyer and seller are on the same page,” she said. “As for sellers, I think that you should be aware that homes are falling out of contract so pay attention to that and those clauses and try to negotiate terms that work for you.”</p>
Return to Top	Click here to read the full report.

HEADLINE	08/16 Agencies fall short federal relief reporting
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/news/2022/08/wa-state-agencies-fall-short-federal-relief-reporting
GIST	<p>Several state agencies failed to adequately track federal relief dollars passing through their bank accounts during the height of the pandemic, auditors reported this month.</p> <p>A newly issued report from the Office of the Washington State Auditor included more than 60 “findings” against state-level agencies for insufficient accounting practices or recordkeeping on federal spending programs between July 2020 and June 2021. Of those, at least 11 findings involved COVID-19 relief money.</p> <p>Sadie Armijo, director of state audit and special investigations, said state agencies continued to struggle in 2021 with tracking dollars down through contractors and grant recipients to ensure they used the money as permitted by federal regulations.</p> <p>“If we’re not able to see what the money was spent on, it’s really difficult for us to know if it was allowable,” she said, adding, “We don’t know if there were fraudulent payments going out.”</p> <p>None of the new findings identified fraud, Armijo said, but detailed documentation helps establish the necessary accountability to ward off misuse.</p> <p>Agency officials sometimes cited short spending deadlines or staffing limitations for missed reporting requirements. In other cases, they argued their departments used alternative methods for tracking spending or vetting recipients.</p> <p>The new report shows the state spent nearly \$37 billion in federal money in fiscal year 2021, close to double the approximately \$18 billion spent annually prior to the pandemic. Funding from the American Rescue Plan and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law have continued to swell state coffers in the months since the audit period ended.</p> <p>Agencies reportedly spent \$17.6 billion in federal money on COVID-19 response and relief during the audit period while passing through approximately \$2 billion to other recipients, such as local businesses or social service programs.</p> <p>Auditors issued findings to 12 state agencies overall, noting deficiencies in 21 of the 25 federal programs they reviewed. The report also flagged tens of millions of dollars in pandemic response spending as “questioned” due to partial or missing documentation.</p> <p>Both auditors and government agencies have faced a slew of challenges as they oversee historic levels of federal money coming into the state for urgent relief efforts while navigating new and, sometimes shifting, spending restrictions. Armijo said some agencies overlooked required risk assessments or performance reports during the audit period.</p> <p>“There’s a lot of special tests and special reporting that has to go back to the federal government,” she said. “We did find a lot of instances where those federal reports that they were required to send weren’t getting sent.”</p>

The report indicates the state Department of Commerce and the Department of Social and Health Services collectively spent more than \$1.2 billion in Coronavirus Relief Funds in fiscal year 2021. Both received multiple findings for missing documentation or insufficient monitoring.

Auditors identified \$6.4 million in likely questionable costs associated with rental assistance and other Commerce Department local government assistance programs with insufficient monitoring, according to the report. Commerce also failed to conduct risk assessments on all recipients in its small business and local government assistance programs. Risk assessments help check whether recipients qualify for federal money and can establish how much monitoring they may require.

Commerce officials [told auditors](#) they sometimes relied on previous risk assessments and weekly progress reports to vet recipients and monitor emergency spending.

"Considering the circumstances under which these funds were administered," the department responded in the report, "Commerce feels strongly that its internal controls were sufficient and effective given the rapid timeline, the volume of subrecipients and funding, and staffing capacity, all of which needed to be managed during the peak of the pandemic."

The Department of Social and Health Services also faced multiple findings for documenting spending and monitoring subrecipients. The report stated the department spent about \$224.6 million in Coronavirus Relief Funds on social services during the audit period, including more than \$126 million on the Immigrant Relief Fund.

Auditors questioned the eligibility controls for ensuring clients for the Immigrant Relief Fund program qualified. DSHS officials responded that the program had verified immigration status and assigned clients unique numbers to protect confidentiality.

"We continue to take steps to ensure that internal controls are in place to comply with federal and state requirements," DSHS wrote in a statement to Crosscut. "At the heart of our work is providing essential services to nearly 2 million Washingtonians each year, which our staff has done admirably, despite the challenges of the ongoing pandemic."

The Immigrant Relief Fund has since faced [numerous delays](#) in distributing additional relief payments. Auditors also issued a finding against the Department of Corrections for using about \$17 million in Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds to cover expenses outside the allowable time period. Corrections officials responded that the Legislature had allocated the funding in response to a budget request before the department had realized the timing restrictions.

The state's Office of Financial Management also received a finding for incomplete or inaccurate reports on relief spending. OFM told auditors an employee compiling the reports left without passing along some original records.

"Numerous unsuccessful attempts were made to locate the documentation from the employee's electronic work files to support the data uploaded into the federal system," OFM responded in the report, adding, "A full time staff was hired who now oversees the reconciliation, compilation and reporting of [Coronavirus Relief Funds]."

The Washington State Department of Agriculture and the Employment Security Department also received findings.

Outside of COVID-19 relief, the report cited one child care payment program at the Department of Children, Youth, and Families that could not be audited due to insufficient accounting records. Auditors issued a rare "disclaimer" on that program and flagged \$293 million in unauditable funds.

Armijo, with the State Auditor's Office, said questioned or unauditable funding issues go back to the federal government for review. In some rare cases, federal officials could demand repayment from the state.

She also noted the annual audit of federal programs typically comes out in late March, but the immense increase in federal spending and other pandemic challenges pushed back the release of this report.

The auditor's office continues to catch up with spending from late 2020 and 2021 when COVID-19 relief from the federal government spiked. The office has separate teams auditing COVID-19 funding at the local level.

One local [report](#) issued a finding last week against the Spokane Public Facilities District for using Coronavirus Relief Funds on marketing gifts that included food and alcohol. District officials contended the gifts qualified under federal rules because it was part of a broad campaign to re-energize interest in events after pandemic closures.

Armijo said additional dollars from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will increase the amount of money requiring auditing over the next year. Auditors must also revisit any significant findings with follow-up reviews as part of the next annual report.

"The auditing of this funding from the pandemic isn't over," she said. "We're still in the middle of it. ... There's still a lot of work to be done."

[Return to Top](#)

You can read the entire 1,083-page [audit report](#), or peruse an [interactive summary](#) of the report.

HEADLINE	08/16 Flood survivors 9mo. later still await FEMA
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/news/2022/08/nine-months-later-whatcom-county-flood-survivors-await-fema-aid
GIST	<p>From her driveway in the early evening of Nov. 14, Maryann Snudden could see the Nooksack River — its bank typically a mile away — creeping over the main road in Everson, a city of 2,500 tucked in the foothills of the Cascade mountains in northwest Washington. The swelling river swallowed roadside shrubs and drew closer to her doorstep. And closer.</p> <p>The sound of pummeling rain boomed through the darkness. By midnight, 3 feet of water pooled in Snudden's living room. Soon, an avalanche of debris and freezing floodwater overtook the home that Snudden, a widow, had bought with her mother-in-law only three years earlier.</p> <p>"The water ripped through so quickly that it shoved my bed through the wall," Snudden recalled.</p> <p>The deluge reached as high as the ceiling, inundating furniture, photos, clothes, books, electronics, everything. In the kitchen, the powerful currents pried two refrigerators and a water heater off the floor. Outside, the water swept Snudden's 30-foot ski boat across the nearby blueberry field.</p> <p>Snudden, 52, and her mother-in-law, 74, were trapped. Snudden's son — who lives in a different city — took to Facebook, imploring anyone with a boat to rescue them. "By the time anyone could even come and help, there was 6 feet of water right out the front door," she said.</p> <p>It was around 5 p.m. the next evening when they were finally rescued, pulled into a boat while the river battered their waterlogged home.</p> <p>It's been more than nine months since the Nooksack River broke free of its banks and steamrolled through the cities of Whatcom County, in the northwest corner of Washington bordering Canada. Once a lush, vibrant place sandwiched between Puget Sound and the Cascades, Whatcom County today is home to hundreds of people like Snudden, who lost everything in the November 2021 flood and continue to shuffle between hotels, damaged homes and travel trailers, pinning their hopes on an overwhelmed Federal Emergency Management Agency.</p>

FEMA has come under fire in recent years for failing to meet the immediate needs of survivors after major disasters. Critics say its programs are [inequitable](#) and that [long wait times](#) for its home-buyout projects make them useless for many.

“The FEMA process is cumbersome to navigate. The help that does come takes a long time to get here, and it’s not nearly enough,” said Everson Mayor John Perry, who like many others in Whatcom County had anticipated more immediate and widespread federal assistance in the wake of the devastating flood. FEMA itself makes it clear that [its capacity is inherently limited](#). In an email response to InvestigateWest, FEMA stressed that its “programs alone are not designed to make survivors [whole again](#), but they can provide stability and access to additional resources needed to begin rebuilding and recovering from the floods.”

“These disasters are always locally led, state coordinated, and federally supported,” said Stacey McClain from the Washington State Emergency Management Department. According to FEMA, “the road to recovery” requires additional resources from community organizations, insurance, low-interest loans, and other local, state or tribal agencies.

But disasters on the scale of November’s flood are far beyond the capacities of community-based relief groups, highlighting the lack of resources available at the local, state and federal levels, Perry and other officials said.

Besides, climate change is creating further strain on FEMA’s mission to help people before, during and after a disaster, because billion-dollar disasters in the U.S. are happening every 18 days on average, according to [Climate Central](#), an independent climate science and research organization. The damages caused by coastal and riverine flooding are [projected to cost](#) \$40.6 billion each year by 2050 — a 26% increase — regardless of whether or not global carbon emissions reduction targets are met.

“Over the 20th century, responsibilities for emergency response got very consolidated at the federal level, particularly in FEMA,” said Anna Weber, a senior policy analyst with the Natural Resources Defense Council, a nonprofit environmental advocacy group. She recalled an analogy a colleague once made on the subject. “They said, ‘After a disaster, everyone expects FEMA to come in with giant airplanes and drop bags of money out with parachutes.’ But the reality is much more complicated than that.”

And so, officials acknowledge, people devastated by major disasters in America are often left waiting for help that may never come.

“We were left alone!” Snudden said. “We were left alone to fend for ourselves, and in places that we couldn’t even live in.”

‘Where is FEMA?’

The immediate emergency response fell to state and local officials. Mayor Perry, local police and community members equipped with boats and trucks worked tirelessly to reach those in need. Incredibly, only one person was killed, but during the crisis, the 911 dispatch had a queue of more than 100 pending rescues.

Snudden’s 911 call didn’t get any response from police, and it was Perry who rescued her and her mother-in-law in the end.

In the days that followed — after the river receded back to its designated banks — the community banded together to begin the slow, arduous process of recovery: slinging sandbags, shoveling silt from roads and driveways, fishing valuables out of soggy houses, helping wash each other’s soiled clothes, and lending a hand wherever one was needed.

Perry, and people like Snudden, all began to ask the same question: “Where is FEMA?”

A presidential major disaster declaration was finally made on [Jan. 5](#) — 51 days after the flood. Only then was FEMA authorized to come to Whatcom County.

FEMA's arrival meant that flood victims could begin registering for federal disaster assistance. By [Jan. 11](#), survivors could apply for assistance on [household and essential needs](#). "The Washington Military Department's Emergency Management Division and FEMA worked together to award \$1.4 million in federal grants to individuals and households in Whatcom County," FEMA said in an email response to InvestigateWest. On the ground, FEMA opened disaster relief centers throughout the county, where Disaster Survivor Assistance teams helped with aid applications. FEMA also issued fact sheets about [individual assistance](#) and the importance of [flood insurance](#).

The [Whatcom Long Term Recovery Group](#) is a volunteer-based nonprofit that helps coordinate recovery services for families impacted by the flood. That includes a team of local volunteer disaster case managers who help survivors navigate the flood recovery process. They worked closely with FEMA agents, going door-to-door to assess flood damage and help survivors apply for aid, like federal disaster assistance. That includes "grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses and other programs to help individuals and business owners recover from the effects of the disaster," according to FEMA.

FEMA has several tools to help after a disaster. The [Hazard Mitigation Assistance](#) program provides funding for eligible projects that help reduce disaster risk. This larger program includes the [Hazard Mitigation Grant Program](#) — which helps rebuild a community after a disaster — and three others: [Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities](#) for reducing future disaster risk, [Flood Mitigation Assistance](#) to help reduce the risk of flood damage for buildings insured by the National Flood Insurance Program, and a [Post-Fire Assistance](#) grant program.

The [Individual Assistance Program](#) supports post-disaster recovery for households and essential needs. And [Public Assistance](#) helps rebuild damaged infrastructure, like roads and bridges, with various categories and levels.

Lacey De Lange is the Whatcom Long Term Recovery Group's lead disaster case manager. She currently helps about 600 households with FEMA aid applications and appeals and works closely with regional FEMA agents. According to De Lange, these agents "bent over backward to do anything they could within their rules and regulations to try and get funding for the flood survivors."

Still, "there's never enough money," De Lange said. "People tend to think that FEMA is *the* savior that will come and help everybody," she said, adding that "there's a big gap between what people get and what people need."

For Snudden, that rings especially true.

Snudden used to work with foster children at the Washington Department of Children, Youth, and Families, but she lost her job during the pandemic. Since November's flood, she has moved 10 times, paying for hotels out of pocket and even moving back into her flood-damaged home at times. It was not until mid-March that the Whatcom Long Term Recovery Group was able to help put Snudden up in a hotel where she stayed through the end of June.

Although state and federal assistance was available for temporary hotel accommodations, Snudden found Whatcom Long Term Recovery Group's assistance much easier to navigate. The local recovery group is not "lined with red tape," she said, and they did not require the amount of documentation that FEMA does. "FEMA made it too complicated," she said.

For one, FEMA requires survivors "to document how [they] used disaster funds and keep all receipts for at least three years for verification of how [they] spent the money," according to FEMA guidance.

Still, Snudden managed to apply for FEMA aid and currently receives some [rental assistance](#), including for a storage unit. But there's a caveat: "I have to pay it first, and then they reimburse me, which is interesting because I don't have a job," she said. "I worry about making it for the next storage unit payment, you know, and it just keeps going month after month."

Road to recovery

In the months since the flood, the focus has progressively moved toward long-term recovery.

Whatcom County's Emergency Management Department and its [River and Flood](#) Division are working with FEMA's [Interagency Recovery Coordination group](#) on long-term recovery efforts. FEMA's coordination efforts help to bridge local, state and federal governments to work on watershed management, land use planning, the rural agricultural economy and public warning systems in anticipation of future disasters.

A key component of the long-term recovery effort is the state's decision to offer a buyout and elevation programs — the former allows individuals to volunteer to have their house acquired by the state and removed from the floodway; the latter raises homes to avoid future flood damage. This is done with money allocated by FEMA through its Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.

The goal: getting people out of harm's way.

Applying for and implementing the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, however, is "a bureaucratic nightmare," according to Deborah Johnson, a river and flood engineer from Whatcom County's Public Works Department. Johnson is actively involved in the county's long-term recovery efforts.

"People can't do anything with their home until they are approved for the buyout or elevation," Johnson said. "When the grant comes through, the message from FEMA basically says, 'Yes, we're giving you the money, but you can't fix anything up until then,'" she said, adding that there is a two- to five-year wait for the buyout process to go through. "And that leaves a lot of people in limbo. Flood survivors are really struggling."

A data analysis by Columbia Journalism Investigations shows that Whatcom County has endured four major floods in the last 30 years but has received the third-fewest buyouts in the state — only 12. That does not include pending buyouts following the latest flood. Other counties in Washington have benefited from this program, like King County with 60 buyouts in the past 30 years, Skagit County with 82 and Cowlitz County with 132.

In Whatcom County, 2,000 homes reported damage after the flood. According to John Gargett, deputy director of Whatcom County's Division of Emergency Management, the areas more severely affected by the flood are also places where many people are economically vulnerable, which creates further challenges for moving to safety.

"The first question is: Are these people even in a position to build a new house or move to a different area?" Gargett said. The next question is one of land availability. "We know there aren't a lot of areas large enough ... especially when you're looking at hundreds of homes that are within a floodway."

"That suggests that people need to uproot their lives and move to a whole different community," he said, adding that the state's housing crisis makes it even more difficult to find safe, affordable places to live.

"Are there FEMA programs for any of this? Frankly, no," he added. "There are no federal programs that say, 'Sorry, your house is flooded out, we'll go build you a new one somewhere else.'"

Still, this home buyout program has become the nation's go-to strategy to relocate people out of harm's way after a climate disaster.

The average value of damage to a home affected by the flood is about \$30,000 to \$35,000 per house, according to Gargett, and the FEMA individual assistance program awards just under \$6,000 on average. “Right off the bat, you’re starting off in the hole if you’re a homeowner,” Gargett said.

FEMA recognizes that the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program “is not a simple process,” as stated in its [fact sheet](#). Grant approval requires coordination and agreement between state and local governments and FEMA. Additionally, “it is important to note that many flooded properties don’t qualify for a buyout, funding is limited and requests for funding may exceed available resources,” according to the same fact sheet.

With the funding from FEMA’s Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, Whatcom County is offering a volunteer-based buyout program, which means individuals with property in harm’s way can sign up to be bought out. As Snudden’s house is directly in the [floodway](#) — the space where a river naturally floods — she was first in line to sign up, and is now anxiously waiting for the buyout to be completed.

Things take time. “It could take a year to 18 months just to know if we even got the grant funding. Then there’s a whole process of contracts and appraisals and acquisitions, buyouts, or elevations,” said Johnson, the county engineer.

According to Johnson, it likely will not be until late 2023 that the funding for the first buyouts under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program will come through, providing long awaited, albeit still [limited](#), financial relief. “But there are people like Maryann Snudden who can’t wait that long,” Johnson said. “Their homes are in harm’s way, they’re living in a trailer, and there isn’t enough funding to help people get through it,” she said.

Snudden, for her part, is adjusting to life in a new travel trailer. She moved into the trailer at the end of June, after the Whatcom Long Term Recovery Group could no longer help displaced individuals stay in hotels.

While the Whatcom Long Term Recovery Group is helping pay for her spot in a trailer park, Snudden is funding the trailer with a loan that she will have to repay with the expected buyout money, which may not arrive until the end of next year.

Still, Snudden is grateful to have a roof over her head and believes that someday her new trailer will feel like home. “This morning, I woke up, got a cup of coffee, went outside, and just sat there for a good hour with my new neighbors — not thinking of the flood, not thinking about why I’m here to begin with,” she said. “This will be a good healing place, I think, to be able to carry on and move forward.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Sanctions devastate Russia economy
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/report-sanctions-devastating-russian-economy/
GIST	<p>For months, Russian President Vladimir Putin has insisted that his country’s economy — facing sanctions, hundreds of global companies pulling out and a shortage of manufacturing materials — is doing just fine. But according to economists — and everyday Russians — that’s not the full story.</p> <p>Stanislav, whom <i>The Record</i> only identifies by first name to protect his safety, owns an online marketing business in St. Petersburg, Russia. Back in March, he spoke with the Click Here podcast about Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and the ensuing sanctions, which were already eating away at his bottom line. Today, those sanctions are hitting the small business owner even harder.</p> <p>“It’s reducing 20% of my revenues,” he said in July, explaining that his foreign customers can’t pay for his services. “So I’m trying to find a solution for my family.”</p> <p>A recent report from Yale economists argued that Stanislav’s experience is now common in Russia, despite defiant rhetoric from Putin arguing otherwise. For months, the Russian president has styled himself</p>

as [the world's energy czar](#). He's bragged that Europe needs Russia's gas far more than Russia needs the money from selling it.

[Jeffrey Sonnenfeld](#) of the Yale School of Management and [Steven Tian](#) of the Yale Chief Executive Leadership Institute instead argue that Russia [needs to export energy to save its spiraling economy](#).

Contrary to Putin's boastful claims, Sonnenfeld and Tian say the country is experiencing massive supply shortages and domestic production has stalled.

"The weapons that the Ukrainians are recovering from the battlefield, you're finding semiconductor parts in these weapons that were [salvaged from radios, from refrigerators](#)," Tian said. "This is the level of desperation that Putin is having to sink to because he can't get the parts and equipment that he so desperately needs."

According to Sonnenfeld, hundreds of thousands of engineers and tech workers have also left the country. That's left a deficit in skilled workers that Russia needs to succeed in the long-term.

"Russia brings nothing to the world market other than energy, grain and cyber terrorism," he said. "That's it."

Sonnenfeld said that the actual state of the Russian economy, in contrast to the state's cheery self-reported statistics, is similar to South Africa's wheezing economy in the 1980s, when it staggered under the weight of global sanctions due to apartheid.

The [Click Here podcast spoke with Sonnenfeld and Tian](#) to learn more about what the future might hold for Russians like Stanislav. The interview has been edited and condensed for clarity.

CLICK HERE: Can you give us an encapsulation of how the sanctions against Russia are damaging its economy?

JEFFREY SONNENFELD: In every sector of the economy, we're seeing declines from 20% all the way up to 60, 70% declines. You can see that unemployment is soaring. Twelve-hundred firms have pulled out of Russia already. Multinational firms have taken away as much as 40% of the GDP, maybe a little bit more. They also have taken away a lot of employment. Russia acknowledges that that was at minimum 12% of their workforce.

CH: What surprised you most about your research into the Russian economy?

JS: What was most surprising is how Putin suppressed any of the bad news. The standard national income statistics that all nations have used at least since the Second World War — including Russia over the last 30 years under [former President Boris] Yeltsin and, believe it or not, even under Putin in the last 20 years — they've built up credibility in their numbers. As the oil economy expert [Daniel Yergin commented recently](#), they've destroyed 20 years of their own statistical credibility and trust in the last few months.

CH: Can you talk a little bit about the unorthodox ways that you gathered this information?

JS: We just go to the other side to get the data. In a global economy, for every buyer there's a seller; every seller, there's a buyer. If Russia's not going to put out the true information, it's still available.

STEVEN TIAN: We're looking at data from the ports industry, we're looking at proprietary data from corporations and financial institutions, and we're able to draw across so many different data sources and piece together a really holistic picture of what's going on in the Russian economy.

CH: So instead of looking at the big dots, you're looking at all the little dots.

ST: That's right. That's the same reason why we don't just boil it all down to a simple GDP forecast as some others, [such as the IMF](#) [International Monetary Fund], without explaining any of it. What we do is we try to give you the entire landscape of what's going on in the Russian economy at every single level.

And no matter how you slice and dice it, the same picture comes out, which is that the Russian economy is really, really, really being devastated.

CH: Can you give us an example of how the economy is being devastated?

ST: [These are reports coming out of Russia itself about the automotive industry.](#) It's not a secret that cannibalization of parts is taking place. Russia has been open about [suspending safety regulations when it comes to the production of automobiles](#). The reason is they don't have enough airbags. They don't have enough safety brakes. They're now making cars without airbags and safety brakes. I don't know about you, but I wouldn't want to drive a car without airbags and safety brakes.

You can also look at some of the weapons Russians are using on the battlefield. The Ukrainians are recovering weapons with [semiconductor parts that were salvaged from radios, refrigerators](#). This is the level of desperation that Putin is having to sink to because he can't get the parts and equipment that he desperately needs.

CH: One of the things everybody's been talking about is how these sanctions are unprecedented. And what I found really interesting about some of the various things you've talked about is there actually are some comparisons like the apartheid sanctions.

JS: Those businesses pulling out had symbolic as well as substantive meaning so that the Afrikaners could no longer bury their heads in the sand, the way many average Russians are. They could now see that the rest of the world is seeing them as a rogue nation. What's going on here is sort of a game of chicken, a game of who can hold out the longest.

CH: What's the one thing you're keeping an eye on?

ST: It's hard to boil it down to any one thing, because ultimately this is not a short-term story. No economic pressure campaign works overnight. That's never happened throughout history. Rather, the thrust of economic pressure is to structurally degrade and hollow out Russian civil society by eroding its economic capabilities over time, and that's happening at every single level.

JS: What's going on here is sort of a game of chicken. And Putin's desire is to split the West. So what I look to is to make sure that unity is reaffirmed in the West. And we just saw this past week that [the EU \[European Union\] came together for a 15 percent reduction in gas use](#). The fact that they came together is very important and that continued unity is what I look to see. And that's what will win out I think, in this waiting game.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Electronic warfare reshapes Ukraine war
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/how-electronic-warfare-is-reshaping-the-war-between-russia-and-ukraine/
GIST	<p>Drones have played an outsized role in Ukraine's efforts to locate troops and plan out attacks in its war with Russia. But the devices are increasingly thwarted by an invisible enemy: Russia's electronic warfare arsenal.</p> <p>Electronic warfare systems have been used by both Russia and Ukraine in recent months to locate, disrupt and jam electronic and GPS signals from weapons and drones. The systems can be used by aircraft, naval ships, ground forces, and helicopters, according to Samuel Bendett, an analyst and expert in unmanned and robotic military systems at the Center for Naval Analyses.</p> <p>Electronic warfare systems use signals such as radar, radio, and infrared transmissions to detect, interpret and disrupt communication. The stations detect enemy electronic signals and attack the equipment emitting them essentially with white noise, which makes them inoperable.</p> <p>Although both countries have made use of the technology, Russia in particular has invested in a wide range of equipment — from tactical close-range systems to ones that can supposedly disrupt enemies dozens of kilometers away, Bendett said. And Russia has increasingly made use of these systems as</p>

cyberattacks and ground strikes against Ukraine's communications infrastructure have proved to have limited impact.

"[When] they realized that wasn't enough, they turned to electronic warfare," said Makena Young, associate fellow with the Aerospace Security Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).

Disrupting drones

Electronic warfare technology isn't particularly new: Even before the war, Russia actively promoted its electronic warfare systems, according to Valentyn Badrak, director at Ukrainian Center for Army Conversion and Disarmament Studies. It used some of the same systems in previous conflicts, including the invasion of Crimea and eastern Ukraine in 2014 and the Syrian civil war in 2015.

But the systems have seen particularly heavy use in recent months as Russia looks to disrupt Ukraine's drone strategy.

Ukrainian charities have raised millions of dollars to purchase and develop unmanned aerial vehicles, and the country has launched piloting schools, including Dronarium and Boryviter, to train hundreds of professional drone operators.

More than 400 pilots graduated from these two schools in July, according to the Ukrainian Digital Transformation Ministry.

Ukraine has no centralized supply of drones for the army — some soldiers buy drones themselves, and others receive them from friends, family or charitable funds. Small commercial drones, such as DJI quadcopters, are not designed for war, and make easy targets for sophisticated electronic warfare attacks, according to Bendett.

In addition to small commercial drones used for surveillance, Ukraine's drone fleet has combat UAVs, like the Turkish Bayraktar TB2 and R18 developed by the Ukrainian drone unit Aerorozvidka.

But drone operators have found it difficult to keep these devices in the air.

"There are entire segments of the front where [Ukrainian drone operators] can't fly their drones since they are getting jammed by the Russian EW forces," Bendett said.

The Russian military is currently deploying Krasukha-2 and 4, R-330 Zhitel, Moskva-1, Leer-3, RP-377L/LA Lorandit, and Pole systems, among others, according to Bendett. They primarily target mobile networks, satellite navigation, and communication between drones and their operators, he said.

Electronic warfare systems have already had a major impact, Ukrainian drone operators told The Record. Russia has claimed to have destroyed at least 1,700 Ukrainian drones since the start of the war, although Ukraine hasn't confirmed this figure.

"To say how many drones we lost, we need to know how many of them we had at the beginning of the war," said Vadym, the head of the robotics department at Aerorozvidka, who asked to go by his first name due to security reasons.

Ukraine's efforts

Although Russia has many strengths with electronic warfare, Ukraine is trying to catch up, according to Badrak.

The Ukrainian electronic warfare arsenal is similar to Russia's — both countries inherited much of the technology from the USSR and developed systems together prior to the war. In Ukraine, the systems are developed by two private companies — Ukrspetsvvyazok and Proximus. Among the most popular,

uniquely Ukrainian electronic warfare systems, according to Badrak, are Enclave, Bukovel, and Prometheus-MF5.

But Ukrainian systems face several challenges. Russia's most commonly-used drone in Ukraine, dubbed "Orlan," can fly at an altitude of 5,500-6,500 meters, where Ukrainian electronic warfare systems can't reach, Ukrainian Colonel Dmytro Kashchenko [said](#) in an interview with the Ukrainian media.

Another challenge for the Ukrainian army is Russia's possible deployment of Iranian drones on the battlefield, which are more resistant to electronic warfare systems, according to Badrak. Russia has reportedly signed a contract with Iran to buy 1,000 drones for its army, [according to](#) war correspondent Elijah J. Magnier.

Wider impacts

In addition to disrupting drones, electronic warfare has been used to block communications in Ukraine.

Because of this, most of the Ukrainian military uses the U.S. L3Harris systems, which are more secure, according to Badrak. Ukrainians also use Elon Musk's satellite internet Starlink, which is not as affected by Russian electronic warfare systems. "The Russians can locate Starlink terminals, but deciphering the internet stream is very difficult, so we recommend using them," according to Vadym from Aerorozvidka.

Musk has tweeted that the systems have been [targeted](#) by attacks. "Starlink has resisted Russian cyberwar jamming and hacking attempts so far, but they're ramping up their efforts," he wrote.

Although some alternative communication channels exist, there isn't always a way for Ukrainians to protect themselves from Russian electronic warfare systems, according to Bendett. Improving defense involves masking, protecting, and limiting "electronic signatures," including radio and cellular communications and electronic signals emitted by combat vehicles and systems, he said.

According to Young, "the best way to protect yourself from EW is to make sure your equipment is less vulnerable to these systems and that all of your communications are secure."

Electronic warfare-resistant equipment is already under development. U.K.-based technology and defense aerospace company QinetiQ, for example, has [introduced](#) a new laser-controlled drone that can eliminate the radio connection.

"Most drone manufacturers have taken notice and will look for ways to avoid the impact of EW," according to Vadym. "There is a solution to any problem, but it takes time," he said.

For now, the conflict is revealing what war will look like in the future, according to Young.

"Space and cyber capabilities have been used during this war in ways we have never seen before. It's a quick and easy way to disrupt someone's communication," she told The Record.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Firefighters uneasy about brush fire risk
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article264472451.html
GIST	<p>As Pierce County has heated throughout August, the rising fire risk has made local fire departments uneasy.</p> <p>In a tweet last week, Central Pierce Fire & Rescue wrote that over the the last 11 days, its firefighters responded to more than two fires a day on average. In a phone call with The News Tribune, department spokesperson Darrin Shaw attributed the summer heat waves, which will restart again this week, as part of the reason for the increase.</p> <p>"Right now it's just the hot, dry weather and the wind," Shaw said.</p>

We have responded to 25 fires in the last 11 days. Clear flammable vegetation and debris from the area around your home and outbuildings. Ensure all materials with fire are properly extinguished bonfires, cigarettes... Remove limbs that overhang the roof of your home. pic.twitter.com/5uJlipQiUT — Central Pierce Fire & Rescue (@CentralPierce) August 12, 2022

This week, Puyallup's weather could be as hot as 94 degrees, according to The Weather Channel. Other parts of Pierce County are expected to hit the mid-90s, which will continue drying out vegetation.

Joe Meinecke, spokesperson for the Tacoma Fire Department, echoed Shaw's sentiments. While Tacoma's jurisdiction is more urban than Central Pierce's and less likely to experience brush fires, Meinecke told the newspaper his department also is seeing a slight increase in fire calls.

Western Washington's heavy spring rainfall could hold some of the blame. Both Meinecke and Shaw noted that based on their experience, high precipitation levels that immediately precede summer lead to dry, dense vegetation. That vegetation is easily ignitable; when the golden brown flora is dry and dense enough, a nearby car spark or still-lit cigarette butt can cause a brush fire.

"Hey, we had all this rain in the spring," Shaw said. "Did that help? Well, no. That caused more fuel because now [vegetation is] bigger."

Research supports their hypothesis; a 2020 peer-review study of fires in Africa found that fire rates were higher during rainy years and lower during arid periods.

A major concern for Central Pierce throughout the rest of the dry period will be urban interface fires, or fires that start in open spaces near buildings or residential areas. When the weather is arid and windy, as

Shaw expects it to be in the upcoming weeks, flames can spread to nearby homes. Shaw thinks the high-risk period will last until there is at least a week straight of heavy rainfall, likely in the middle of fall.

"You can't let your guard down," he said. "It could rain today, but it's still gonna dry out and be super dry."

Both departments recommended taking steps to reduce the likelihood of starting and enabling large fires. Meinecke said it is important for people to make sure their cigarettes are fully extinguished and to dispose of them properly, like in public ashtrays.

To prevent active fires from spreading to homes, Shaw recommended keeping dead vegetation, like tree trimmings or firewood, at least 15-to-20 feet away from houses. In addition, he said, residents or their landlords should trim any tree branches that overhang roofs.

"Keeping the fuel away from the home is the most important thing for [preventing] urban interface fires," Shaw said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 WA pays \$2M to assaulted hospital workers
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/WA-pays-2M-to-workers-assaulted-at-psychiatric-17376905.php
GIST	<p>A judge has ordered the state agency that operates Washington's largest psychiatric hospital to pay more than \$2 million to four female health workers who were assaulted by a violent patient who targeted women.</p> <p>One of the nurses who filed the lawsuit, Bernia Garner, lost part of her ear when the patient vaulted over the nurses station, knocked her to the ground, choked her and bite off part of her earlobe.</p>

That same Western State Hospital patient grabbed Kaitlyn Tritt's hair with both hands and wouldn't let go. Staff tried to release his grip but the patient and nurse ended up on the floor with her hair wrapped around her neck, as he tried to choke her.

The patient also attacked nurse Karen Jolley-Arnold several days later while screaming that he was going to kill her, and repeatedly struck her in the leg, causing a debilitating wound. He jumped on Eloisa Panza during a night shift, knocking her to the ground and trying to bite her thigh.

Their lawsuit claimed hospital supervisors and the Department of Social and Health Services knew the patient repeatedly attacked women but they failed to provide a safe environment.

"There's no real accountability," said James Beck, the lawyer representing the workers. "They tell the Legislature that they are properly responding to assaults based on reports by investigators, but nobody's utilizing them."

The Pierce County judge also ordered the agency to pay an additional \$2.6 million to cover attorney's fees and other costs.

State officials say they don't plan to appeal the jury's verdict.

"The safety of our staff and patients at Western State Hospital and all of our 24/7 facilities is one of our highest priorities and we continue to focus our efforts in this area," department spokeswoman Tyler Hemstreet said in an email.

After years of failing health and safety inspections, the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services stripped the hospital in 2018 of its certification and federal funding, totaling \$53 million a year. It also lost its accreditation with the Joint Commission. Neither has been restored.

The Washington Department of Labor and Industries has repeatedly cited Lakewood-based Western State Hospital for maintaining an unsafe work environment, Beck said.

The patient who attacked the workers and others had been civilly committed to the hospital in 2017. A state report in 2018 said he "had ongoing assaultive behavior on a somewhat regular basis. He frequently required one-to-one monitoring and repeatedly targeted females with long, dark hair and attempted to pull their hair. This included both staff and other patients."

When he attacked nurse Arnold, he kicked her in the leg where she had suffered a previous injury, Beck said. It impacted her mobility and it took a year for it to become stable. She also suffered psychological trauma from being assaulted at work, he said.

The state refused to find her a new position so she suffered physically and economically, he said.

The jury found that the state knew about the patient's behavior and "failed to take reasonably prompt and adequate corrective action reasonably designed to end it." They also said the state did not "reasonably accommodate" the employees' disabilities and impairments.

They awarded past and future benefits for Arnold and Garner. Eloisa Panza is the only one still working at the hospital, Beck said.

A separate lawsuit filed by hospital worker Daniel Dawson claimed another patient had a history of assaulting and targeting African American staff, but officials failed to take appropriate corrective action. The patient called Dawson racist names and attacked him in 2018 and 2019.

"Western State Hospital violated Dawson's rights through its deliberate indifference in creating a dangerous work environment with its continued violation of workplace safety regulations that manifested wonton and willful disregard of Dawson's safety," his lawsuit said.

	The state agreed to settle his case for \$375,000.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/16 Third La Niña winter headed for Seattle?
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/weather/is-a-colder-than-average-third-la-nina-winter-in-store-for-seattle/
GIST	<p>This could be hard to imagine now, but with a rare third consecutive La Niña winter in the forecast, Washington could be in for a colder than usual winter, according to Assistant State Climatologist Karin Bumbaco.</p> <p>The La Niña pattern that has been in effect for over two years has a good chance of extending into early next year, according to the Climate Prediction Center. The center is predicting colder than usual temperatures from December through February.</p> <p>During La Niña events, trade winds are stronger than usual, pushing more warm water toward Asia and increasing the cold water upwelling on the western coasts of the Americas, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. These cold waters in the Pacific push the jet stream northward, leading to drought in the southern U.S. and heavy rains and flooding in the Northwest and Canada. During a La Niña year, winter temperatures are warmer than normal in the South and cooler than normal in the North, according to NOAA.</p> <p>Recall, if you will, a few highlights from our past two winters.</p> <p>Between Feb. 12-14, 2021, about 6-12 inches of snow fell from the Everett area south into Oregon, with Portland receiving 9 inches of snow.</p> <p>At Sea-Tac, 8.9 inches of snow fell Feb. 13, making it the snowiest single day recorded in February at the airport and the snowiest single day at Sea-Tac since Dec. 31, 1968.</p> <p>In some areas, the heavy February snow was followed by lots of freezing rain, according to Logan Johnson of the National Weather Service in Seattle.</p> <p>Last December, during our second consecutive La Niña winter, an arctic blast brought some of the coldest daily temperatures on record to the Puget Sound region and more snow than usual. The weather blanketed roads in snow and led to holiday travel disruptions and power outages.</p> <p>On Dec. 26, the low at Sea-Tac was 20 degrees, beating the previous low-temperature record of 22 degrees for that date, set 73 years ago in 1948. On Dec. 27, we had a second day of record-breaking lows with the high only reaching 17 degrees.</p> <p>“If it happens, this will be only the third time with three La Niña winters in a row in our 73-year record,” said Emily Becker of the University of Miami/CIMAS in an ENSO blog post.</p> <p>The La Niña cycle, which is linked to more potent weather events, occurred about 28% of the time from 1950-1999, according to an analysis by The Associated Press. But in the past 25 winters, they’ve been brewing nearly half the time.</p> <p>“[La Niñas] don’t know when to leave,” Michelle L’Heureux, head of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration forecast office for La Niña and its more famous flip side, El Niño, told The Associated Press.</p> <p>Her analysis shows La Niña-like conditions have occurred more often in the past 40 years. Other new studies are showing similar patterns.</p>

	<p>The whole La Niña and El Niño system has a great influence on weather and climate during the cold season in the Northern Hemisphere.</p> <p>The jury's out on how we'll fare in fall.</p> <p>Last year, more than 19 inches of rain were recorded at Sea-Tac between Sept. 1-Nov. 30, compared with 11.81 inches in a normal fall, according to NWS Seattle.</p> <p>Western Washington also saw bomb cyclones and one atmospheric river after the next, which brought torrential rain, evacuations, power outages, landslides and severe flooding.</p> <p>One condition that's different from years past, according to Bumbaco, is that La Niña winters typically bring above-average precipitation and lower temperatures, but this year the Climate Prediction Center says the odds are equal for above average, average or below average rain.</p> <p>The Climate Prediction Center's three-month outlook for August through October predicts above-normal temperatures statewide.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/16 Power struggle in Iraq intensifies
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/16/world/middleeast/iraq-parliament.html
GIST	<p>BAGHDAD — Iraqi political leaders spent the last 10 months struggling unsuccessfully to form a government, their country sinking deeper and deeper into political paralysis in the face of growing drought, crippling corruption and crumbling infrastructure.</p> <p>Then in June, those talks imploded. And now, there is a scramble for power as Iraq's main political factions vie for the upper hand.</p> <p>The powerful Shiite Muslim cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, who leads the largest bloc in Parliament, quit the negotiations in frustration, then urged his followers to take to the streets to get what they wanted. Heeding his call, they set up a tent encampment that has blocked access to Parliament for more than two weeks to prevent any government from being voted in.</p> <p>It is not the first time that Mr. al-Sadr has resorted to the threat of violence to get what he wants politically. He led the armed Shiite revolt against the American occupation of Iraq from 2003-2009, and U.S. officials say they now worry that Iraq could plunge again into violence and instability.</p> <p>Equally alarming, despite years of American efforts to shape Iraq into an alternative Shiite power center that would be more Western-oriented than Iran, Mr. Sadr and his Shiite political rivals favor a political system that would confer more power on religious clerics along the lines of an Iranian-style theocracy.</p> <p>"We're looking at the beginning of the end of the American-backed political order in Iraq," said Robert Ford, a former American diplomat in Iraq and now a fellow at Yale University and the Middle East Institute.</p> <p>For decades, Iraq has reeled from crisis to crisis — a cycle that shows no signs of abating. Following the 2003 U.S. invasion to oust Saddam Hussein, there was a civil war, and then the takeover of large parts of the country by the Islamic State.</p> <p>As a result, Iraq, despite vast oil reserves, has remained mired in political chaos with a stagnant economy that has left its unemployed youth vulnerable to recruiters for extremist movements and made investors leery. At the same time, Gulf States led by the United Arab Emirates normalized relations with Israel and forged ahead politically and economically to become the new center of gravity of the Middle East.</p> <p>And the U.S. vision for Iraq's future has seemed to slip further and further away.</p>

When President George W. Bush invaded in 2003, his government tried to encourage Iraqi political leaders to set up a representative system that would share power more equitably among the country's three main groups — the Shiite majority, and the Sunni Muslim and Kurdish minorities.

"The Americans were kind of hoping that there would be these cross-sectarian and more policy-centered alliances between the political factions, but the sectarian and ethnic divisions won out," Mr. Ford said. "Instead, we have this squabbling between and within sectarian and ethnic communities about how to divide Iraq's oil money."

About 85 percent of the Iraqi government is funded by oil income, according to the World Bank. And under the current political system, each major political faction in Parliament gets control over at least one government ministry, and with it, patronage jobs and the opportunity to skim money and pocket kickbacks.

As politicians have focused more on their own power than national interests, Iran has found it easier to persuade a number of Sunni, Kurd, and Shiite leaders to support the policies it cares most about; the cross-border movement of Iranian arms, people, and goods.

The crisis now enveloping Iraq pits Mr. Sadr, and his mostly Shiite supporters against a coalition of Shiite parties with militias linked to Iran in a bitter power struggle. The caretaker government, fearing violence, has been reluctant to disrupt Mr. Sadr's blockade, allowing him to hold the country hostage to a sweeping list of demands: the dissolution of Parliament, new elections, and changes in election law and possibly the Constitution.

"It looks like a peaceful coup d'état, a peaceful revolution," Mahmoud Othman, a former Parliament member who was not affiliated with any political party, said of the Sadrists' blockade of Parliament. "I say peaceful because his followers are not carrying guns. Sadr is stronger than guns. He is now the strongman on the street and he is imposing his will on others."

So far the blockade has not been violent.

Several thousand Sadrists occupy the tent encampment, working in shifts. They wander about, listening to clerics denounce government corruption and eating shawarma, grapes and watermelon donated by sympathizers. They rest in tents in the heat of the day, waiting for Mr. Sadr's next instructions via tweet — his favored means of communication.

Sunnis and Kurds have remained on the sidelines.

Many Sunnis say they feel disenfranchised and see no role for themselves in the future Iraq, and many wonder whether it would be better to divide the country and have a separate Sunni enclave, said Moayed Jubeir Al-Mahmoud, a political scientist at the University of Anbar in the city of Ramadi, a Sunni stronghold.

"Unfortunately I do not see a secure and prosperous future for my country," he said, describing Iraq as a failed state controlled by Iran-linked militias. "We are concerned that the state will just go from being dominated by militias to being dominated by al-Sadr."

The United States and most neighboring countries have stayed largely silent about the chaos in Iraq. Only Iran has tried to intervene, meeting with Mr. Sadr's Shiite opponents and encouraging negotiations even though Mr. Sadr, a nationalist, has taken a strongly anti-Iranian stance in recent years.

The last thing Iran wants is for Shiites to fight one another and risk weakening their grip on power, which could end up undercutting Tehran's influence in Iraq.

A number of Mr. Sadr's positions align with Tehran. Both want to force the remaining 2,500 U.S. troops to leave Iraq, oppose any interactions with Israel and favor criminalizing homosexuality.

This is not the first time Mr. Sadr has resorted to mass demonstrations. But this time, he is using street protests to force the country to ignore last October's election results and to hold a new vote that could return his legislators to power.

The parliamentary election 10 months ago went well for Mr. Sadr. Legislators who supported him won the most seats of any faction and had almost forged a governing coalition supported by Kurdish and Sunni partners. The next step would have been to bring it to a vote for approval.

Mr. Sadr's Shiite rivals, however, refused to attend the Parliament session, denying him the quorum needed for a vote. Frustrated, Mr. Sadr asked his legislators to resign in protest.

The parties who had gotten fewer votes, primarily his Shiite rivals, then filled the seats that Mr. Sadr's followers had vacated potentially giving them control over ministries and government offices and leaving Mr. Sadr out.

He responded by calling for the blockade of Parliament to prevent a vote on a new government.

"So this is when Muqtada al-Sadr decided that if the democratic procedures are not allowed to play themselves out, then the response is revolution," said Rend Al-Rahim, a former Iraqi ambassador to the United States and the president of the Iraq Foundation, a nonprofit organization that promotes democracy.

At the tent encampment, the atmosphere is decidedly Shiite. Last week, Mr. Sadr's followers marked Ashura, which commemorates the death of Hussein, a grandson of the Prophet Muhammad. His death is often depicted as the start of the division between Sunni and Shiite Muslims.

Everywhere there were signs of support for Mr. Sadr's cause: Even some of the poorest chipped in to pay for a tent or meals. A water company donated enough every day to fill the large tanks that supply the tent dwellers. The markets in Sadr City — a poorer area of Baghdad filled with Sadr loyalists — sent crates of tomatoes, onions, dates, grapes and apples.

To cope with the 115 degree heat in daytime, some protesters installed large fans or air coolers hooked up to Parliament's 24-hour electricity supply.

"It's the first time we have had electricity 24 hours a day," said Faiz Qasim, an enthusiastic Sadr organizer who usually works as a day laborer. Much of Baghdad suffers from daily electricity cuts.

Sadr supporters from the south of Iraq prepared large caldrons of stews daily. One day it was a rich curried chicken, while nearby, the next day's meal — a black-and-white cow tethered to a cellphone tower — placidly masticated some watermelon. A little further down the same street, another cow was being slaughtered for dinner that night.

Clerics periodically rallied groups of men — there are almost no women in the tents — with chants against the current political leaders:

"Many people suffered from those who were here in this swamp.

They climbed to power on the backs of the innocent and Iraq suffered because of them.

There are many people holding out their hands, begging in the streets and going through the garbage.

Al-Sadr says America and Israel have the money and the weapons. But what do we have?

Allah almighty."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Crimea is a key place in Russia war effort
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/16/world/europe/crimea-ukraine-russia.html

KYIV, Ukraine — The Crimean Peninsula dangles off Ukraine’s southern coast like a diamond, blessed with a temperate climate, sandy beaches, lush wheat fields and orchards stuffed with cherries and peaches.

It is also a critical staging ground for Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Connected via bridge to Russia and serving as a home to Moscow’s Black Sea Fleet, Crimea provides a vital link in the Russian military’s supply chain that supports tens of thousands of soldiers now occupying a vast swath of southern Ukraine.

For President Vladimir V. Putin, it is hallowed ground, having been declared part of Russia by Catherine the Great in 1783, helping pave the way for her empire to become a naval power. The Soviet ruler Nikita S. Khrushchev gave it to Ukraine in 1954. And because Ukraine was then a Soviet republic, not much changed.

But when the Soviet Union collapsed nearly four decades later, Russia lost its jewel. Mr. Putin thus claimed to be righting a historic wrong when he illegally annexed Crimea in 2014.

Mr. Putin promised at the time that he had no intention of further dividing Ukraine. Yet eight years later, in February, tens of thousands of Russian soldiers stormed north out of the peninsula, kicking off the current war.

In recent days, military targets in Crimea have come under attack, and the peninsula once again finds itself at the fulcrum of a great power struggle.

Military Importance

Early in the war, Russian troops surging from Crimea seized swaths of the Kherson and Zaporizhia regions that remain the key to Russia’s occupation of southern Ukraine.

Crimea, in turn, offers key logistical support for Russia to maintain its occupation army, including two main rail links that Russia relies on for moving heavy military equipment. Crimean air bases have been used to stage sorties against Ukrainian positions, and the peninsula has provided a launching ground for long-range Russian missiles.

The peninsula is also home to Russia’s Black Sea Fleet, helping Russia maintain dominion over the sea, including a naval blockade that has crippled Ukraine’s economy.

A Place in the Sun

Russia is cold — a fifth of the country is above the Arctic Circle. But it can be positively balmy in the sun-drenched Crimean city of Yalta.

“Russia needs its paradise,” wrote Prince Grigory Potemkin, Catherine the Great’s general and lover, when he urged her to claim the land.

Crimea is where czars and Politburo chairmen kept vacation homes. Before the West imposed sanctions on Russia for illegally annexing the peninsula, it was a place where wealthy Eastern Europeans went to unwind and party.

“Casinos buzz and ping everywhere amid the city’s pine-bowered alleyways,” a [New York Times Travel article](#) proclaimed about Yalta in 2006, adding: “Much — if not everything — goes in this seaside boomtown.”

Tourism fell steeply after 2014. But when [explosions rang out at an air base](#) last week near Crimea’s western coast, there were still visitors at nearby resorts taking photos and videos as black smoke obscured the sun.

Ties to Russia

	<p>“Crimea has always been an integral part of Russia in the hearts and minds of people,” Mr. Putin declared in his 2014 address marking the annexation. But his is a selective reading of history.</p> <p>Over the centuries, Greeks and Romans, Goths and Huns, Mongols and Tatars have all laid claim to the land.</p> <p>And perhaps no group in Crimea has watched the unfolding war with as much trepidation as the Tatars, Turkic Muslims who migrated from the Eurasian steppes in the 13th century.</p> <p>They were brutally targeted by Stalin, who — in a foreshadowing of the Kremlin’s justification for its current war — accused them of being Nazi collaborators and deported them en masse. Thousands died in the process.</p> <p>In 1989, Mikhail Gorbachev, the last Soviet leader, allowed Tatars to return to Crimea. And before the 2014 annexation, they made up about 12 percent of Crimea’s population, numbering about 260,000 there.</p> <p>In 2017, Human Rights Watch accused Moscow of intensifying the persecution of the Tatar minority in Crimea, “with the apparent goal of completely silencing dissent on the peninsula.”</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	08/16 Colleges prepare for monkeypox threat
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/aug/16/colleges-prep-monkeypox-threat-even-covid-19-fears/
GIST	<p>Colleges across America are on high alert for monkeypox as they get ready for the fall semester and are forced to deal with yet another infectious disease.</p> <p>Administrators are pointing out that, unlike COVID-19, monkeypox requires close contact and the virus is unlikely to be transmitted among students sitting in a classroom. Still, the American College Health Association says colleges “are taking monkeypox seriously.”</p> <p>“There are a lot of aspects of campus life that could increase transmission — residence halls, contact sports, frequent social events and others,” association spokeswoman Rachel Mack said. “Many campuses have already communicated to students about the risks, how to reduce risk, symptoms to look for, and where to go if they were exposed or have symptoms, among other things, and they are looking for additional resources and guidance to help them prepare and manage outbreaks.”</p> <p>Colleges are working to recognize and combat monkeypox even as they take a more relaxed approach to the coronavirus, the last major health threat on campus. Masking rules are rare, and institutions are easing off regular COVID-19 testing and closing down isolation dorms.</p> <p>As they shift to the new threat, college administrators are walking a fine line between protecting gay and bisexual men who account for most of the reported monkeypox cases and warning that anyone can catch the disease.</p> <p>“While many cases in current U.S. outbreak have been among gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men, monkeypox can be a risk to anyone, regardless of sexual orientation or the sex/gender of sexual partners,” David S. Reitman, the medical director for the student health center at American University, said in a recent university-wide email. “It is critical to avoid any stigmatization or discrimination of any groups related to monkeypox.”</p> <p>He said monkeypox typically spreads by skin contact, which can include intimate contact, but it is not a sexually transmitted infection and sexual contact is not required for transmission.</p> <p>Experts said colleges will also have to consider the social aspects of detecting and treating monkeypox.</p>

“This is going to be overlaying with a lot of concern about stigma — young people experimenting with their sexuality, people wanting to remain in the closet,” said William Schaffner, an infectious diseases specialist at Vanderbilt University. “There will be people who are concerned if they go to the student health center and present themselves with a rash illness, and it turns out to be monkeypox, they will fear this will get out — that it won’t be treated with complete confidence.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have recorded nearly 11,900 cases of monkeypox, a virus that is endemic to parts of Africa but started spreading in the U.S. and other non-endemic countries in mid-spring.

The virus is related to smallpox and features a rash with painful lesions. A small percentage of cases are fatal, though the CDC hasn’t reported any deaths in the U.S. this year.

In New York City, the epicenter of the crisis, New York University said it is making testing available to students. It launched a special monkeypox page on its website and warned students, faculty, and all other employees about the virus in a campus health update.

“NYU is closely following developments with regard to monkeypox, our Student Health Center staff is on heightened alert for instances of monkeypox, and we are in contact with local health authorities,” NYU spokesman John Beckman said. “Our public awareness efforts will continue, and we will provide the NYU community with guidance, periodic updates, and information as the situation evolves.”

American University said it has been coordinating its response with the D.C. Department of Health and other universities in the region since early June. It identified the first presumptive cases of monkeypox within the university community in early August, though the persons lived off campus and were recovering.

George Washington University posted a campus message on Aug. 10 that explains in detail how to look for signs of monkeypox. It said symptoms typically occur seven to 14 days after exposure but may appear five to 21 days after exposure.

Like other schools, GWU told the community to be on the lookout but not panic.

“Even though D.C. has higher case rates in relation to other parts of the U.S., MPX is occurring very infrequently here, and even less so among our campus community, where numbers of cases have been very low,” the message said, using an alternative name for monkeypox and declining to provide an exact number of cases. “While MPX can be painful, severe complications from MPX infection are rare, and to date, there have been no deaths related to MPX in the United States.”

Colleges haven’t launched mass vaccination programs to combat monkeypox as they tried to do with the COVID-19 vaccines.

For one thing, there are only so many doses of the Jynneos vaccine to go around. The administration recently launched a “dose-sparing” strategy to give the shots intradermally and stretch supply five-fold.

“Vaccine and antiviral medications are currently in very limited supply, with a focus on confirmed cases, identified close contacts and some identified priority groups,” the University of Michigan told students and staff on Aug. 5.

The CDC calls for directing the vaccines to people who were in close contact with someone with monkeypox; people who are aware that a recent sexual partner has been diagnosed with the virus; people with multiple sex partners in recent weeks in an area with known monkeypox transmission; and lab workers and some health workers who might come into contact with the virus.

The University of Michigan listed county health departments where members of their Ann Arbor, Dearborn and Flint campuses can find vaccines if they qualify under eligibility rules.

HEADLINE	08/16 Record number Asian Americans buy guns
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/aug/16/asian-americans-gun-ownership
GIST	<p>Vivian Moon, a real estate agent and artist, had never felt particularly afraid as a woman living alone in Buena Park, a small California city outside Los Angeles. But when violent attacks against Asian women and seniors increased across the US early last year, she became disillusioned with the police’s ability – and willingness – to protect people who looked like her.</p> <p>So, like many other Americans of Asian descent, she decided to buy a gun. “I realized I have to take ownership of how I want to live my life,” said Moon, 33.</p> <p>In the year since, Moon said she’s made an effort to reach out and teach her friends, many of whom are women of color, about gun safety. As a Korean woman who grew up in the 1990s, Moon is also inspired by the legacy of the Los Angeles uprising and the armed Korean immigrants who defended their businesses on rooftops when riots broke out in South Central. “Back then Korean Americans took a stand and took their safety into their own hands,” she said.</p> <p>Gun ownership rates soared to record heights during the pandemic, as more than 5 million people became first-time owners, according to the trade organization National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF). That includes Asian Americans. As videos of anti-Asian violence began flooding social media and cable news, gun sales to Asian Americans, though still significantly lower than those of other racial groups, rose by an estimated 43%.</p> <p>Asian Americans who experienced or witnessed increased acts of racism at the start of the pandemic were more likely to buy firearms for self-defense, according to a new peer-reviewed study from the University of Michigan and Eastern Michigan University. More than half of those who purchased a gun are first-time owners.</p> <p>“Racism is like a time bomb that causes stress and anxiety, which increases people’s intention to buy firearms,” said Tsu-Yin Wu, the lead researcher and director of EMU’s Center for Health Disparities Innovation and Studies. “Not only are people carrying it on more days, they’re also carrying it more than 50% of the time.”</p> <p>During the pandemic, a host of Asian American affinity groups have emerged in southern California to provide resources and a sense of community to new gun owners. Tom Nguyen founded LA Progressive Shooters to provide firearms education to people of color, after seeing a “massive increase in first time gun owners”, particularly single women and queer people.</p> <p>Nguyen, who leads introductory classes on firearm storage and shooting, said the pandemic has been a “lightning rod moment” for Asian Americans and other marginalized groups of people who previously have held an ambivalent or fearful attitude toward guns.</p> <p>“Many folks are intimidated by these conservative, white-dominated spaces that don’t seem very friendly to them,” he said. “So the gun industry has a long way to go in terms of addressing more diverse segments of our population who are interested but feel forgotten or ignored.”</p> <p>At the same time, there are documented risks associated with rising household gun ownership, including higher rates of homicides and suicides. An April study from the Annals of Internal Medicine, which surveyed more than half a million Californians, found that people who live with handgun owners are shot to death at a higher rate than those who live in gun-free homes. Women made up 84% of victims.</p> <p>Data on firearm use among Asian Americans is limited, as the group, which comprises about 7% of the US population, has historically had low gun ownership rates. From 2015 to 2019, FBI’s Supplementary Homicide Report documented 37 justifiable firearm homicides committed by Asian Americans. By contrast, more than 3,000 Asian Americans died in firearm suicides, homicides and accidental shootings</p>

during the same time period. Among Asian American youth, the firearm suicide rate rose by [71%](#) over the last decade – the largest growth of any racial or ethnic group, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The National Rifle Association, meanwhile, has taken the pandemic as an opportunity to more [aggressively market](#) guns to Asian Americans. Varun Nikore, executive director of AAPI Victory Alliance, said it's opportunistic for gun manufacturers to court the group given the existing data linking rising gun ownership rates to firearm-related deaths.

“They’re directly exploiting our pain and trauma by doing direct and targeted campaigns to increase the amount of gun ownership in communities that have not typically had it,” he said. “And they’re doing it just for profit.”

Some gun rights activists, though, see the current surge as the dismantling of historical barriers, since Asians on the west coast were not always allowed to practice their second amendment rights. In 1923, California passed a law denying non-citizens the right to possess concealable firearms. That ruled out Chinese immigrants, a majority of whom were barred from naturalizing by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

Asian Pacific American Gun Owners Association, a non-partisan group formed last March amid a rise in anti-Asian hate crimes, publishes educational materials regarding gun safety and usage in multiple Asian languages. Chris Cheng, a board member and winner of History Channel’s Top Shot competition, said that the civil unrest and relentless scapegoating over the past couple of years have pushed many Asians to arm up for the first time in their lives.

“You see all this eroding trust in our public institutions and our criminal justice system,” Cheng said, citing the January 6 insurrection and calls to defund the police.

Cheng also said the media’s coverage of the gun debate fixates on homicides, which comprise only [one-third](#) of firearm deaths, and overlooks data on defensive gun use. A widely used but contested study cited by the CDC estimates that guns are used defensively between “[60,000 to 2.5m](#)” times a year.

For some Asian Americans, the peace of mind that guns can bring outweighs their potential for harm.

Nathan Tiep, 42, and his wife are in the process of buying their first gun after seeing news coverage of home invasions near their neighborhood of Boyle Heights. Tiep, the son of Cambodian refugees, grew up in Long Beach in the 1990s, where deadly clashes between Asian and Latino gangs made him numb to gun violence. “We knew what guns can do but weren’t afraid of it,” he said.

More so than the surge in attacks against Asians, Tiep said his decision to buy a gun was shaped by the Black Lives Matter protests during the pandemic, which have shattered his trust in law enforcement.

“The past few years have brought to light how the police are with people,” he said. “You’ve seen people get shot and killed by police. Do you really trust that they will serve and protect us?”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Somali-American youths rehab captivity
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/rehab-centers-somali-american-immigrant-youths-captive-torturing-me-11660657481?mod=hp_lead_pos10
GIST	<p>NAIROBI, Kenya—The young Americans imprisoned at Irshad Rehabilitation Centre feared the isolation room the most.</p> <p>When they violated some rehab-center rule, or no rule at all, they’d be locked in the room, located in a corner of an inner courtyard that was topped by electrified wire and razor coils.</p>

Abdirizak Aden Ahmed, a Somali-American teenager from Mechanicsburg, Pa., says he spent a dozen or so stints in isolation during the eight months he was confined against his will at Irshad, in Nairobi's heavily Somali Eastleigh neighborhood.

Irshad and similar facilities in Somalia and Kenya market themselves to desperate diaspora Somali parents as professional treatment for young people who are drug users, alcoholics, mentally ill, gay, disobedient, sacrilegious or simply too Westernized.

Mr. Aden's mother, frantic about his marijuana use in Pennsylvania, says she paid Irshad \$600 a month for what the center promised would be effective drug-treatment, room and board.

The reality is much grimmer.

Mr. Aden says inside the darkened chamber a man named Cherad "Abubakar" Okumu, the rehab center's staff supervisor, punched him until his face bled and doused him in urine and cold water for perceived offenses as minor as failing to memorize verses from the Quran. Mr. Okumu left the 18-year-old laid out on the isolation room's concrete floor, undressed and shivering in a puddle for days, Mr. Aden says. "They were torturing me," he says.

In April, Kenyan police raided Irshad and rescued Mr. Aden, five other Somali-Americans and one Somali with U.S. residency, as well as ethnic Somalis from the U.K., Canada and the Netherlands. The U.S. Embassy in Nairobi secured passports and air tickets home for the American citizens.

The group is among several hundred Somali-Americans the embassy has helped escape from for-profit rehab centers in Somalia and Kenya over the past five years.

According to former residents, an ex-Irshad employee, U.S. diplomats, Somali human-rights activists and Kenyan police, Irshad and many other so-called cultural-rehabilitation centers in East Africa are little better than private prisons where hundreds of young people raised in the U.S. and Europe are stripped of their passports and beaten into mending their ways. In some centers, residents spend their days and nights in chains.

"These cultural-rehabilitation centers are moneymakers and pop up everywhere," says Robyn Luffman, a consular officer at the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi.

Embassy officials say there are four licensed rehab centers in Kenya; police raided two others in 2017.

A spokesman for the Kenyan National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse, which supervises anti-addiction programs such as the one at Irshad, declined to comment on the treatment of residents at Irshad.

The vast majority of cultural-rehab centers are next door, in Somalia, operating with little or no government oversight, according to diplomats and human-rights advocates.

"Hundreds of people are in there—we don't know the exact number," says Guleid Ahmed Jama, a prominent Somali human-rights lawyer.

Since the 1980s, Somalia has slogged through phases of civil war, inter-clan violence, Islamist terror, famine and political strife. Many Somalis escaped to America or Europe, only to watch their Westernized offspring stray from their religion and a culture in which parents traditionally have the last word until their children marry. They sometimes find themselves unable to steer their children clear of drugs, gangs and an unfamiliar legal system, or to help them cope with mental illness.

Large numbers of diaspora Somali parents from the U.S., the U.K., Denmark, Canada and elsewhere have decided their best hope is to take their children—most in their late teens or early 20s—back to Somalia to relearn traditional ways.

Some parents deposit their children with family in the hope that Somali behavioral standards will rub off on them.

Others commit their children to private centers in Somalia and Kenya that promise to turn young people ruined by the West into respectful, drug-free Somalis.

In Minnesota, home to 79,000 Somali immigrants, the threat is so pervasive that young Somalis warn each other darkly to run for it if their parents announce a family vacation to Dubai or a visit to a dying grandmother in the old country.

“We have found in many cases the victim’s parents had no idea of the conditions and were shocked to hear of the physical, mental, and sexual abuse their children suffered,” says Larry André, the U.S. ambassador in Mogadishu, Somalia’s capital. The State Department has issued a travel advisory warning that such centers operate with “inadequate or nonexistent licensing and oversight.”

Mr. Aden, who split his childhood between Mechanicsburg and St. Cloud, Minn., admits he smoked marijuana in the U.S., and he spent two years in and out of juvenile detention. “My son made some mistakes when he was young,” says his mother.

She says she worried if he didn’t straighten up before he turned 18, he’d end up with an indelible criminal record that would ruin his chances of getting a good job in the U.S.

A cousin suggested a rehab center in Mogadishu.

Early last year, she told Mr. Aden they were going to Africa to see family. They paid a visit to relatives in Kismayo, on the Indian Ocean coast of Somalia, then traveled to Mogadishu.

Mr. Aden smoked marijuana on the morning of his 17th birthday that February in Mogadishu. An older cousin picked him up, and Mr. Aden, very high and barely familiar with Somalia, let himself believe they were going to McDonald’s as a birthday treat.

Instead, the car pulled into a walled compound. Mr. Aden was taken aback when a group of men grabbed him and seized everything he had—his Crocs shoes, his lighter, his money, even the rubber band that kept his ponytail secure. Within minutes, guards locked chains around his ankles and wrists and threw him in a cell. He realized too late that he had been tricked into a rehab center, a fate he had heard about but hadn’t taken seriously.

On the first night, he says, staff members whipped him with a hose, working their way from one part of his body to another. “Your feet are the worst,” he recalls. “They’re sensitive like crazy.” His ankles and wrists were shackled day and night for virtually the entire six months he was confined at the center, he says. His ankles still bear visible scars. “I wanted to kill myself,” he says. “I didn’t want to wake up.”

Mr. Aden’s parents are separated and tell sharply different stories about their son’s experience in East Africa. Mr. Aden’s Ethiopian-born father, Aden Wako, a truck driver, says he thought his wife had enrolled their son in school in Somalia.

When Mr. Aden was finally allowed a phone call home, he risked retaliation from the staff and told his father about the chains and beatings. Mr. Wako demanded that his wife have the boy released, Mr. Aden says.

Mr. Aden’s mother, who works in a warehouse, says she doesn’t believe her son’s reports of abuse. She says she pulled him out of the Mogadishu center last August, mostly because the weather there was too hot.

“I took him to Africa to get better, not to arrest him or anything,” the mother says.

Fartun Weli, executive director of Isuroon, a Somali women's organization in Minneapolis, says diaspora parents opt for African rehab centers as a last resort.

"If I were a mom and faced the choice of sending my son to an American prison where he might get raped, I'd rather send him to some horrific place in Somalia," Ms. Weli says. "That's what every mom and every dad is thinking."

Immediately after removing him from the Mogadishu center in August 2021, Mr. Aden's mother flew him to Nairobi, in neighboring Kenya. A week later, men identifying themselves as police showed up at their hotel.

In Mogadishu Mr. Aden had been blindsided when his mother forced him into a rehab center. This time he saw it coming.

He pretended to go along with the men and then bolted down the street. He says the men caught him, beat him bloody in the back of their SUV and drove him to Irshad, which sits behind cinder-block walls and a guarded metal gate.

The center has inner and outer courtyards, separated by a bolted steel door. In the outer courtyard is a small office, where a sign on the wall says that the minimum rehab stay is three months, and the maximum six months. Phone calls are permitted only after three weeks.

Next to the office is the room where Mr. Okumu, known to residents as the center's enforcer, lived with his wife, its cook.

Staff wouldn't allow a reporter into the inner courtyard or the isolation room. Surveillance cameras monitored in the office show a series of resident rooms arrayed around a concrete patio, each with steel blackout shutters, steel security bars and hasps allowing the doors to be bolted and padlocked from the outside.

Relatives routinely have troubled family members involuntarily confined at the center, according to Irshad's managing director, Abdullahi Hussein, who says he is also one of its owners.

On average, families pay the equivalent of \$340 a month for treatment, plus additional fees for food, he adds.

Mr. Abdullahi says he has no day-to-day contact with residents, but denies they are abused. He says such reports are the fantasies of the drug users his center usually treats. "He may think he's being harmed, but there's nothing like that," Mr. Abdullahi says. "We don't do such things."

He declined to make Mr. Okumu available for an interview. Mr. Okumu, who didn't respond to calls or text messages, quit Irshad several weeks ago, according to staffers.

Mr. Abdullahi didn't respond to further questions about Mr. Aden's case. He referred inquiries about the facility's professional standards to its consulting psychiatrist, Dr. Gerald Nganga.

Dr. Nganga says he has visited the center only twice to examine residents, and even then was limited to interviews in the exterior courtyard in the presence of Irshad's in-house staff. He says none of the residents complained to him of abuse. He says he wasn't aware of the police raid.

A former Irshad employee says if the young men complain, managers extend their incarceration by a few months.

"I would hate to be affiliated with something like that," Dr. Nganga says. "You go to a hospital to get well. You don't go to be restrained and beaten. That has nothing to do with medicine."

Hassan Sheikh, Irshad's manager, says the isolation room is used "if somebody needs discipline."

"First he meets with counselors—they give him a warning and advice," Mr. Hassan says. "If he doesn't obey the warnings, he normally gets two to three hours in the isolation room."

The former employee describes it differently, saying new arrivals are routinely locked in isolation for several days. Mr. Aden reports spending his first five days at Irshad in the punishment room.

"If a boy behaved badly, there was a private room with cold water on the floor," the former employee says. "They had to sleep on the wet floor all night until morning."

Another Minnesotan freed during the April raid says an Irshad executive was behind the wheel when men carrying persuasive-looking police ID cards ambushed him outside of his Nairobi hotel in February. The Minnesotan had just arrived from a family visit to Ethiopia.

"You're being arrested," the 21-year-old recalls one of the men saying.

"What for?" he says he responded. "I literally just came to the country last night." The men delivered him to Irshad.

Upon arrival, the Minnesotan says he was locked in Irshad's isolation room, beaten, soaked in cold water and left to sleep in the resulting puddle on the hard floor.

The U.S. Embassy confirmed that he was among those rescued from Irshad.

A third young Somali-American held at Irshad told much the same story. "We would get beaten up in a small ass room where there is no lights or windows," he wrote in response to questions. The embassy verified that he, too, was rescued from Irshad.

In April, Kenya's Directorate of Criminal Investigations received an anonymous tip that young foreigners were being held against their will at Irshad, according to police spokesman Michael Mugo.

Officers raided the center and collected the 10 foreign residents, but left a dozen ethnically Somali Kenyans locked up at Irshad. Mr. Aden says he tried to sneak one of the young Kenyans out with the rescued foreigners, but was caught.

One officer involved in the raid described conditions at Irshad as "inhumane," says Inspector Mugo, who adds that no arrests were made. Most cases collapse because the victims don't appear in court, he says.

Officers drove Mr. Aden and the others to the police station, where a U.S. diplomat met them and arranged for their return to the U.S.

Mr. Aden is now staying with an uncle in St. Paul and driving a forklift in a Minneapolis lumber yard. His troubles derailed his education, but he is still hoping to finish his last year of high school. He dreams of becoming a pilot someday.

He no longer speaks to his mother. "What she did to me wasn't right," he says.

Her reply: "I was doing all of that to save him, so he'd have a better future."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Germany to keep 3 nuclear plants running?
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/germany-to-keep-last-three-nuclear-power-plants-running-in-policy-u-turn-11660661914?mod=hp_lead_pos4

BERLIN—Germany plans to postpone the closure of the country's last three nuclear power plants as it braces for [a possible shortage of energy](#) this winter after Russia throttled gas supplies to the country, said German government officials.

While temporary, the move would mark [the first departure from a policy](#) initiated in the early 2000s to [phase out nuclear energy in Germany](#) and which had over time become enshrined in political consensus.

The decision has yet to be formally adopted by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's cabinet and would likely require a vote in Parliament. Some details are still under discussion, three senior government officials said. A cabinet decision would also need to wait on the outcome of an assessment of Germany's energy needs that will be concluded in the coming weeks but which the officials said was a foregone conclusion.

Still, while a formal decision could be weeks off, the government believes two key conditions allowing a temporary extension of the life of the three remaining plants, now expected to close on Dec. 31, have been met: Germany is facing [a likely shortage of gas](#) and letting the reactors operate longer poses no safety concern, the officials said.

"The reactors are safe until Dec. 31, and obviously they will remain safe also after Dec. 31," a senior official said.

The plan underlines how deeply [Moscow's attack on Ukraine](#) has scrambled politics in Europe, and particularly in Germany, which long enjoyed close economic relations with Russia and whose economy had grown highly dependent on Russian natural-gas supplies.

Shortly after the invasion, Mr. Scholz moved to ramp up military spending and deliver arms to Ukraine, breaking with years of pacifism and a legal ban on the delivery of offensive weapons in conflict zones. The nuclear move, while limited and temporary, would break a third long-held taboo in German politics. Mr. Scholz hinted at the decision last week, saying for the first time that it could make sense to keep Germany's last three nuclear reactors online.

A spokeswoman for the Economy Ministry, which oversees energy, denied that the government had made a decision on extending the life of the plants, adding that it would depend on the findings of the continuing assessment of Germany's power needs.

Extending the life of the three plants beyond their current closing date is no panacea for [Germany's looming energy bottleneck this winter](#). The country is mainly missing natural gas, which is used primarily for heating and manufacturing.

Yet by allowing the plants, which together account for around 6% of the country's electricity production, to stay online, Berlin would remove the need to replace them with gas- or coal-powered plants, allowing gas to be used in areas where it can't be replaced by other fuels.

Mothballed coal plants have already been brought back online to prevent energy blackouts after [Russia slashed gas supplies in June](#), a decision that will complicate Berlin's plans to cut greenhouse-gas emissions and reduce air pollution.

The government has also drafted two executive orders outlining measures to reduce gas and power consumption in the country over the next two years, including by lowering the temperature in public buildings. The country's energy regulator estimates that gas consumption will need to be cut by 20% if Germany is to avoid a gas shortfall this winter and next.

It is unclear for how long the reactors will continue to operate past the December deadline. The three officials said the extension would only be for a few months. Leading figures in the Free Democratic party, the government's third coalition partner, have said the plant should run into 2024.

Several officials said that the extension would only affect the three plants that still operate today and that Berlin wasn't considering reopening plants decommissioned earlier, including three that were shut down last winter.

The nuclear extension is fraught with technical, legal and political hurdles. Laws may need to be amended to allow for the reactors to remain online and obtain fresh fuel rods. Complex certification as well as insurance and nuclear-waste disposal procedures could be required.

It is also politically sensitive. The nuclear phaseout was initiated by the Social Democrats and Greens, the leading parties in the current coalition, and has become part of the parties' identities, particularly for the Greens, a party that was born out of the antinuclear movement.

Leading Green politicians have already accepted a short extension of the nuclear-power generation. Ludwig Hartmann, the Greens' parliamentary floor leader in the state of Bavaria, said that the life of reactors could be prolonged for a "few months" if the region faced the risk of power shortages.

The opposition conservatives, the party of former Chancellor Angela Merkel, who greatly accelerated the phasing-out of nuclear energy following the Fukushima disaster in 2011, now also favors extending the plants' lifespan.

"Not everyone [who keeps using nuclear energy] in the world is stupider than us," Friedrich Merz, chairman of the center-right Christian Democratic Union, said in a recent radio interview.

While the phaseout has for years enjoyed overwhelming popular support, a recent survey by the Forsa Institut polling group showed three quarters of Germans wanted the planned reactor closures to be postponed. Forsa said it had recorded a gradual shift in public opinion in favor of keeping the plants online since Russia invaded Ukraine in February.

The last three German nuclear power plants are Isar 2 in the southern state of Bavaria, Neckarwestheim 2 in Baden-Wurttemberg and Emsland in Lower Saxony, which are operated by E.On SE, EnBW AG, and RWE AG respectively.

A spokesman for EnBW said the company would be willing to discuss an extension of the operation of its reactor if the government asked for it. A spokeswoman for Preussen Elektra, the E.On subsidiary that runs its last nuclear plant, refused to comment. RWE didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Germany has been facing pressure from its European allies, including the European Union's executive body, to extend the operation of its last reactors as part of the bloc's efforts to manage the looming energy crisis.

The ministry for the economy and the environment, headed by Robert Habeck of the Green Party, commissioned an initial stress-test earlier this year, which found that the nuclear reactors wouldn't help solve a potential energy crisis.

After Russia slashed gas exports to Germany by 80% last month, Mr. Habeck ordered a second, broader analysis that would take into account a possible shortage of gas this winter.

Some environmental groups have already announced that they would take legal action against a decision to postpone the plant closure.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Heat wave intensifies Europe energy crisis
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/heat-wave-intensifies-energy-crisis-in-europe-11660668373?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1

Natural-gas prices in Europe headed toward their highest closing level on record as hot summer weather boosts fuel demand and Russia throttles back supplies.

Europe has contended since June with drastically [lower imports of gas from Russia](#), until recently by far its biggest supplier. Moscow cut flows through the Nord Stream pipeline by 80% to punish Germany and others for supporting Ukraine. Fearing President [Vladimir Putin](#) will order [a full cutoff](#), the European Union has embarked on a plan to conserve gas now to burn it over the winter.

A heat wave is jeopardizing efforts to put enough gas into storage to avoid rationing in the cooler months. High temperatures have fueled gas demand in Europe and North Asia, pushing utilities in the two regions to compete for a limited number of tankers carrying supercooled LNG, or liquefied natural gas, and driving prices higher.

Hot, dry and still weather [brings other complications](#). “You don’t have enough wind, or enough coal barges in Germany. And actually in France nuclear plants cannot get enough water for cooling,” said Xi Nan, an analyst at Rystad Energy. “And of course, hydropower levels in general are quite low, especially in Norway.”

In an acknowledgment of the impending crisis, Germany plans to postpone the closure of its [final three nuclear power plants](#)—pausing a two-decade policy of ditching nuclear power, The Wall Street Journal reported, citing government officials

Futures for gas at a trading hub in the Netherlands, the benchmark in northwest Europe, rose nearly 6% Tuesday to €239.62 a megawatt-hour, or \$243.44 a megawatt-hour. If they hold those gains, prices would surpass the settlement high recorded on March 7, shortly after Russia invaded Ukraine.

They are below the intraday high of €345 a megawatt-hour, reached on the same day as the invasion sparked turmoil in energy markets.

With Tuesday’s advance, European gas prices have risen by more than a fifth over the past week. Power markets—currently dictated by the price of electricity-generating gas—are surging too. In Germany, prices for baseload power that will be dispatched in early 2023 rose almost 9% Tuesday to €583 a megawatt-hour.

High prices are taking a toll on energy-intensive industries. On Tuesday, zinc producer [Nyrstar NV](#) said it would idle its Dutch smelting operations starting Sept. 1. Electricity costs are up to 10 times as high as historical levels, and Nyrstar has struggled to pass them on in the form of higher zinc prices, a person familiar with the decision said.

In industrial powerhouse Germany, expectations for economic growth slid so far this month, a survey by the Zew research institute showed Tuesday. Andrew Kenningham, chief Europe economist at consulting firm Capital Economics, said the data suggest [a recession is inevitable this year](#) in part because of the effects of high energy prices on households and industry.

The U.S. hasn’t been immune from the pain, with natural-gas prices up 30% this year and at their highest levels in nearly 15 years. But the increase in U.S. natural-gas prices has been less intense than in Europe. Plus, the U.S. economy benefits by selling natural gas across the Atlantic.

The surge in gas prices also comes in contrast to oil prices, which are down by a third from post-invasion highs, pulling prices at gasoline pumps sharply lower and giving relief to American drivers.

Economies in Central and Eastern Europe that depend on Russian oil and gas are the most exposed in the region. Moody’s Investors Service this month changed the outlook for the Czech government’s credit rating to negative from stable. It cited the risk of prolonged gas-supply disruptions from Russia that could lead to rationing and a deep recession.

	<p>Storage sites in the EU are almost 75% full, according to Gas Infrastructure Europe, putting the bloc on track to meet its target level of 80% by Nov. 1. The heat is making that more difficult, however. One reason: River levels have fallen to such low levels that German coal-power plants are struggling to import fuel. In turn, that means burning more gas to generate electricity.</p> <p>Governments are searching for ways to limit energy bills without boosting gas demand, putting energy-providing companies out of business or damaging public finances.</p> <p>Illustrating the challenge, the German government this week set out a winter levy on a households and businesses, but also promised a relief package for consumers. The surcharge aims to cover the cost gas providers are incurring in the wholesale market, sometimes to buy gas they previously got from Russia. Economists at ING Groep said the charge will push inflation above 10% in the final quarter of 2022.</p> <p>Russia's aim in cutting gas supplies to Europe, analysts and energy executives say, is to cause so much economic harm that support for Ukraine wanes. The continent became increasingly dependent on Russian gas in recent decades as it moved away from coal while reducing domestic gas production in the Netherlands and North Sea.</p> <p>Russia is taking a hit from cutting gas flows to Europe, long its biggest and most profitable customer. State gas giant Gazprom PJSC said Tuesday that production has fallen 13% this year through mid-August, versus a year earlier, though it benefits from the price of gas being higher.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/16 Northeast plunges into intense drought
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/08/16/northeast-drought-dry-rivers/
GIST	<p>Persistently dry conditions in the Northeast have plunged the United States' most populous region into the middle of an intense drought — and it's not yet clear if there's any relief on the horizon.</p> <p>A coastal storm is likely to track off the Northeast coast later this week, but models have wavered regarding how much rainfall will strike the region, much to the chagrin of farmers and forest managers alike.</p> <p>Photos of the drought in the Northeast look as if they've been taken in the Desert Southwest. Major rivers in the region have dropped to their lowest levels in local memory, with certain tributaries of the Boston area's Charles River drying up entirely as locals find themselves able to walk across normally swift-moving rivers.</p> <p>"We are walking on the river. We could walk across it with the right boots," Boston-area photographer Fran Gardino told CBS News. "If you come here normally the river is flowing rapidly down here. It's so strong you couldn't stand in here."</p> <p>Extreme drought is plaguing much of eastern Massachusetts, including Boston, as well as parts of southern and eastern Rhode Island. Under the Federal U.S. Drought Monitor's drought classification system, there's just one level worse.</p> <p>Not a single part of Massachusetts or Rhode Island is free of drought. Extreme drought, which the Drought Monitor warns can cause an extreme reduction of flow in rivers as well as widespread crop loss, has overtaken 24.5 percent of Massachusetts and 33.63 percent of Rhode Island.</p> <p>Boston recorded its fourth driest July on record, measuring just 0.62 inches of rain recorded compared to its average July rainfall total of 3.27 inches.</p> <p>In Providence, R.I., just 0.46 inches of rain were tallied in July, well below the normal of 2.91 inches. On Aug. 9, Rhode Island Gov. Dan McKee (D) issued a statewide drought advisory recommending that local residents prepare for an extended period of dry weather.</p>

“As a precaution, I encourage residents and businesses to consider taking water conservation measures,” McKee said in a [news release](#).

Numerous municipalities in Massachusetts have [instituted mandatory water restrictions](#), limiting the number of days each week in which watering is allowed.

The drought is not just localized to Massachusetts and Rhode Island — it’s regionwide. Parts of New Jersey, New York City, and areas all the way up through coastal Maine are experiencing at least moderate drought. Drought conditions also extend further into the interior Northeast, into all of New Hampshire, nearly all of Vermont and as far west as areas along Lake Ontario in New York.

Some rainfall is expected in the region on Thursday and Friday, though exactly how much is rather unclear, with the two most reliable weather models providing diverging guidance.

The last few runs of the American (GFS) model have trended back toward a rainier solution, with up to 2.5 inches of rain falling across rain-needy parts of Massachusetts and Rhode Island. It also has some much-needed precipitation reaching as far inland as New Hampshire and Vermont.

The European model remains less generous, however, restricting the significant rainfall much closer to the coast and generally north of Massachusetts.

Any rain that falls in the region would certainly be welcome, even if the GFS trends toward a drier, European-like solution. If a wetter, GFS-like solution occurs, it will not be enough to allow most of the region to escape from drought.

“I think we’re probably going to be in this for a while and it’s going to take a lot,” Ted Diers, an assistant director of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services water division, told [the Associated Press](#). “What we really are hoping for is a wet fall followed by a very snowy winter to really recharge the aquifers and the groundwater.”

Vermont farmer Brian Kemp told AP that drought conditions have made it harder for his large herd of cattle to find enough food to graze on.

“Farming is challenging,” Kemp said, “and it’s becoming even more challenging as climate change takes place.”

Dairy farms in Vermont are a \$2 billion per year industry, and drought conditions in the region have meant this year’s yield and quality of hay are both low, making life difficult for farmers who need hay to feed their livestock.

Rhode Island farmer Milan Adams, told AP that many of his fields are covered in a layer of dry powdery soil, which makes for tough hay farming.

“The height of the hay was there, but there was no volume to it. From there, we got a little bit of rain in the beginning of May that kind of shot it up,” he said. “We haven’t seen anything since.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/17 NASA accidentally spies on Putin’s war
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/how-nasa-is-accidentally-helping-people-spy-on-vladimir-putins-war-in-ukraine?ref=home
GIST	At first glance, NASA’s Fire Information for Resource Management System (FIRMS) website does not look like something that can help track a war. Originally built to help firefighters and other officials keep track of global wildfires, the FIRMS webpage shows something that looks a bit like Google Earth

with little red dots scattered across the globe. Each dot represents a fire NASA's satellites detected with infrared sensors pointed at the Earth's surface.

If you move the map to [Ukraine](#), even the most casual observer is able to see that the country is ablaze. A line of fires vaguely correlating with the front line is spread along eastern and southern Ukraine. As it turns out, [NASA's satellites](#), in an effort to track wildfires, are inadvertently capturing the fires in the aftermath of shelling, burning munitions depots, and other heat sources from the conflict.

For people trying to track the conflict only from public sources, FIRMS can be a lifesaver. Social media coverage of the war in Ukraine is a deluge of claims, counterclaims, unattributed or misattributed footage of fighting, as well as actors pushing their own agendas. The location and effect of air and artillery strikes, such as those by the now-famous [HIMARS](#) rocket artillery system, is one such information battlefield.

Any tool that helps verify where and when a strike by Ukrainian or Russian forces happened assists journalists and Twitter's Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) community, sometimes called OSINTers, in figuring out what is happening on the ground. Two of the most well-publicized methods are [geolocating](#) photographs or videos and getting satellite [imagery](#) of the fighting from private companies. For instance, speculation about what caused last week's [explosions](#) at Saki Air Base in Crimea is largely based on combining an analysis of videos taken from afar with imagery bought from commercial satellite services like Planet or Airbus.

FIRMS has quickly become another such tool in the OSINTers' toolkit. "I think I was first made aware of [FIRMS] around mid-April this year," OSINTer and podcast host [Kyle Glen](#), who has since used the system on a daily basis, told The Daily Beast. According to Glen, "I mostly use it to look at areas where I know heavy fighting is occurring to try and get an idea of where the front lines are, I also use it to try and help with geolocation of videos of fires burning."

It can also indicate if an area needs more investigation. [Def Mon](#), a popular analyst who uses the program, told The Daily Beast that, "[FIRMS] can be used to connect dots. Like [here](#). I saw FIRMS first, and then found a tweet I connected to it." Given that Ukraine has recently sought to target Russia's [supply lines](#) to blunt their offensive, Glen found that "fires in unusual places such as bridges or roads are always worth investigating."

For others, FIRMS has a more personal meaning. One user, who has since left Twitter but recounted his experiences in a war [diary](#), relayed how he used FIRMS to track fighting near his home during the battle for Kyiv.

NASA has been using satellites to track fires since at least 2000, but their satellites have never been used to track a conflict at this scale. Beyond the fact that the war in Ukraine is the largest conventional conflict since the system launched, the war is characterized by heavy use of artillery and rockets, which FIRMS is better able to capture. FIRMS can [corroborate](#) social media or press reports of a strike by showing where there are large blazes. If a large pile of munitions or fuel depot is hit, it often burns bright and long enough for NASA's satellites to detect and register it as a wildfire. Locations hit by artillery can also register, but only if the barrage started a fire.

FIRMS' ability to layer information like road networks and display data across time has also come in useful for those looking at the war in the long-term. Twitter users aggregate data from FIRMS to look at the intensity of fighting over the course of weeks or months. Def Mon argues that "if we take a one week snapshot of Ukraine, the FIRMS indications can more or less be used to show us the rough frontline." Dr. Phillips O'Brien, professor of strategic studies at the University of St Andrews and [prolific](#) user of Twitter to track the war in Ukraine, compares FIRMS data over different weeks to show trends in Russian artillery use against Ukrainian forces.

Useful as FIRMS has become, there are some limitations. Because the system is designed for wildfires, it shows larger fires and does not speculate on what might have started them. Twitter users also have to work hard to separate "false positives" (an actual wildfire, housefire, or industrial heat sources like a factory

	<p>smokestack) from strikes on military and logistical facilities. According to Def Mon, FIRMS “becomes less reliable during summer, since stuff burns for all kinds of reasons.” Like all satellites monitoring events on Earth, the quality of detection also depends on the weather and when the satellites pass overhead.</p> <p>As is to be expected with any publicly available tool, not everyone knows how to use it well. Most Twitter users engaging with FIRMS regularly are aware of the system’s limitations, but like all open-source tools, less discerning users are liable to jump to conclusions. Tweets speculating wildly about recorded strikes or the intensity of fighting without considering the weather or timing of satellite passes are not uncommon. The trend is not unique to users looking at FIRMS and speaks to a broader need to professionalize OSINT on social media.</p> <p>The future of FIRMS as a tool to track conflict is unclear. Other wars, such as the conflicts in Yemen and Ethiopia, are much harder to track with NASA’s satellites as they are currently calibrated. Some users, like Glen, just want small features added to improve usability, such as overlaying location names on satellite imagery. FIRMS’ blog is entirely focused on improving the user experience for those using the tool to fight wildfires, so it’s not clear that NASA is interested in officially supporting observers of the conflict. As it stands though, FIRMS has proven invaluable for providing public insight into one of the most violent conflicts of the 21st century.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	08/17 NKorea fires 2 cruise missiles
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/pyongyang-fires-cruise-missiles-south-korea-presidents-100th/story?id=88482070
GIST	<p>SEOUL, South Korea -- North Korea fired two cruise missiles on Wednesday as South Korea’s president marked his 100th day in office.</p> <p>Pyongyang has test-fired its missile system 19 times this year alone, including the latest launch of two cruise missiles Wednesday morning, as intelligence in the U.S. and South Korea has confirmed that North Korea is prepared to conduct its seventh nuclear test.</p> <p>South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol said on Wednesday at a press conference that if North Korea expresses a “steady will” to denuclearize, an "audacious" economic booster program could be on offer from the South but said that talks between the two Koreas will not take place unless it is to establish a substantive and long-lasting peace.</p> <p>Unlike the previous pro-North government, Yoon’s new administration has taken a more aggressive approach to North Korea’s military provocations in the past 100 days.</p> <p>When North Korea fired eight ballistic missiles from four different regions in the country, South Korea and the U.S. joint forces fired eight surface-to-surface missiles as a countermeasure the following day.</p> <p>The joint forces are now gearing up for the 10-days-long Ulchi Freedom Shield joint military exercise which is set to begin next Monday.</p> <p>Public sentiment in South Korea has broadly indicated that, with no end in sight regarding the easing of tensions between the two nations, it might make sense for South to go nuclear itself.</p> <p>“Those who assert that South Korea should develop its own nuclear weapons point out the unequal, threatening fact that North Korea has it and South Korea does not,” Kim Hyung-suk, president of the Council on Diplomacy for Korean Unification, told ABC News. “But it’s only an instantaneous idea. There are numerous restraints to actualize a South Korea-made nuclear weapons program.”</p>

	<p>According to a public opinion poll report by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 71% out of 1,500 people surveyed said that they are in favor of South Korea developing its own nuclear weapon while just 26% percent were against the idea.</p> <p>Asked by ABC News whether he agrees with such sentiments, Yoon said he remains committed to the Non-Proliferation Treaty which he referred to as an “essential prerequisite for lasting world peace.”</p> <p>Yoon, however, is currently facing strong disapproval ratings in South Korea due to domestic political conflicts within his own party, a majority opposition in the National Assembly, and several scandals coming from within his own cabinet. Yoon apologized to South Korean's on Wednesday for these issues and pledged to “listen” to the people with “modesty.”</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	08/16 Recall: large GM SUVs
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/gm-recalls-484k-big-suvs-fix-problem-row-88438956
GIST	<p>DETROIT -- General Motors is recalling more than 484,000 large SUVs in the U.S. to fix a problem that can cause the third-row seat belts to malfunction.</p> <p>The recall covers Chevrolet Suburbans and Tahoes, Cadillac Escalades and GMC Yukons from the 2021 and 2022 model years.</p> <p>The automaker says in documents posted Tuesday by U.S. safety regulators that rivets that hold the buckle to the mounting bracket on the left- and right side third-row seats may have been formed improperly. The belts may not properly restrain a passenger in a crash, increasing the risk of injury.</p> <p>The company says it's not aware of any crashes or injuries caused by the problem.</p> <p>Dealers will inspect the rivet heads and replace buckle assemblies if needed. Owners will be notified starting Sept. 26.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	08/16 States face more Colorado River water cuts
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Business/wireStory/colorado-river-cuts-set-disrupt-farming-american-west-88444640
GIST	<p>SALT LAKE CITY -- U.S. officials announced Tuesday that two U.S. states reliant on water from the Colorado River will face more water cuts as they endure extreme drought.</p> <p>The move affecting Arizona and Nevada came as officials predict levels at Lake Mead, the largest U.S. reservoir, will plummet even further than they have. The cuts will place officials in those states under extraordinary pressure to plan for a hotter, drier future and a growing population. Mexico will also face cuts.</p> <p>Lake Mead is currently less than a quarter full and the seven states overall that depend on its water missed a federal deadline to announce proposals on plans cut additional water next year.</p> <p>The Colorado River provides water to 40 million people across seven states in the American West as well as Mexico and helps feed an agricultural industry valued at \$15 billion a year. Cities and farms across the region are anxiously awaiting official hydrology projections — estimates of future water levels in the river — that will determine the extent and scope of cuts to their water supply.</p> <p>And that's not all: Officials from the states are also scrambling to meet a deadline imposed by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to slash their water use by at least 15% in order to keep water levels at the river's storage reservoirs from dropping even more.</p> <p>Together, the projections and the deadline for cuts are presenting Western states with unprecedented challenges and confronting them with difficult decisions about how to plan for a drier future.</p>

While the Bureau of Reclamation is “very focused on just getting through this to next year,” any cutbacks will likely need to be in place far longer, said University of Oxford hydrologist Kevin Wheeler.

“What contribution the science makes is, it’s pretty clear that that these reductions just have to have to stay in place until the drought has ended or we realize they actually have to get worse and the cuts have to get deeper,” he said.

The cuts are based on a plan the seven states as well as Mexico signed in 2019 to help maintain reservoir levels. Under that plan, the amount of water allocated to states depends on the water levels at Lake Mead. Last year, the lake fell low enough for the federal government to declare a first-ever water shortage in the region, triggering mandatory cuts for Arizona and Nevada as well as Mexico in 2022.

Officials expect hydrologists will project the lake to fall further, triggering additional cuts to Nevada, Arizona and Mexico next year. States with higher priority water rights are not expected to see cuts.

Reservoir levels have been falling for years — and faster than experts predicted — due to 22 years of drought worsened by climate change and overuse of the river. Scorching temperatures and less melting snow in the spring have reduced the amount of water flowing from the Rocky Mountains, where the river originates before it snakes 1,450 miles (2,334 kilometers) southwest and into the Gulf of California.

Already, extraordinary steps have been taken this year to keep water in Lake Powell, the other large Colorado River reservoir, which sits upstream of Lake Mead and straddles the Arizona-Utah border. Water from the lake runs through Glen Canyon Dam, which produces enough electricity to power between 1 million and 1.5 million homes each year.

After water levels at Lake Powell reached levels low enough to threaten hydropower production, federal officials said they would hold back an additional 480,000 acre-feet (more than 156 billion gallons or 592 million cubic meters) of water to ensure the dam could still produce energy. That water would normally course to Lake Mead.

Under Tuesday’s reductions, Arizona will lose slightly more water than it did this year, when 18% of its supply was cut. In 2023, it will lose an additional 3%, an aggregate 21% reduction from its initial allocation.

Mexico is expected to lose 7% of the 1.5 million acre-feet it receives each year from the river. Last year, it lost about 5%. The water is a lifeline for northern desert cities including Tijuana and a large farm industry in the Mexicali Valley, just south of the border from California’s Imperial Valley.

Nevada is also set to lose water — about 8% of its supply — but most residents will not feel the effects because the state recycles the majority of its water used indoors and doesn’t use its full allocation. Last year, the state lost 7%.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Drought devastates cotton harvest
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/drought-devastates-u-s-cotton-harvest-11660649469
GIST	<p>Southwestern cotton growers are abandoning millions of parched acres that they planted in spring, prompting forecasts for the weakest U.S. harvest in more than a decade and sending prices sharply higher.</p> <p>U.S. agricultural forecasters expect drought-struck farmers to walk away from more than 40% of the 12.5 million acres they sowed with cotton and harvest the smallest area since Reconstruction. Back then, in 1868, yields per acre were less than a fifth of what they are today, but the market for cotton was vastly smaller too.</p>

December cotton futures, the most-traded contract, have risen by the maximum allowed by [exchange rules](#) for two consecutive sessions, ending Monday at \$1.136 a pound. Last week, futures rose by about 13%, the sharpest weekly climb since March 2011, when prices were [on their way](#) to a record of \$2.141 a pound.

Cotton was among the commodities that [shot up in price](#) earlier this year. Like other raw materials, it was lifted by hedge funds and other speculators piling into futures markets to blunt the effect of inflation elsewhere in their portfolios.

But cotton also gained from surging oil prices, which raised the price of petroleum-based fibers such as spandex, polyester and nylon. When synthetic fibers like those get more expensive, demand increases for natural fibers like wool and cotton, and their prices rise too.

Cotton futures prices peaked in early May at more than \$1.50, a level reached rarely, [and then they collapsed](#). When oil prices came down from the shock of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, cotton futures lost nearly half their value and [speculators exited agricultural-futures markets](#), taking profits and closing out inflation trades.

Lately, the severity of the Western drought and the toll it has taken on the cotton crop have sent prices climbing anew. They have broken from their lockstep with oil, which has continued to slide amid recession fears and waning consumption.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture on Friday slashed its forecast for the domestic cotton crop to 12.6 million bales, which are about 480 pounds apiece. That would be down 28% from last year, and the smallest crop since the meager 2009 harvest that helped set the stage for record prices. The USDA also predicted some of the lowest end-of season inventories in decades.

A severe drought and some of the hottest weather on record have scorched fields and driven a historically high level of abandonment in the Southwest, the USDA said. Farmers abandon crops when so little grows that it isn't worth the trouble to harvest.

Texas, the top cotton-producing state, has been especially hard hit. The USDA predicts a record low ratio of harvested-to-planted acres there and the state's lowest output since 1986, said Lance Honig, chief of the department's crops branch.

In the high plains of the Texas panhandle, Brent Nelson has given up on all but about 280 of his 5,000 acres. Farmers in his area can usually count on 17 to 18 inches of rain annually, but he said his fields have received only about 3 inches since last August.

"Thank goodness we have federal crop insurance," he said. "It's nothing like making a crop, but it will keep the farmers in business."

Val Stephens, who grows cotton on 1,500 acres south of Lubbock, Texas, was forced to collect insurance on his failed crop and has scuttled plans to plant winter wheat this autumn for lack of moisture. He estimates that 90% of the cotton fields have been abandoned in his parched part of Texas, and there hasn't been measurable rainfall since July 2021.

"As dry as it is, unless you've got some irrigation, it's fruitless," Mr. Stephens said.

Even irrigated fields are mustering mostly puny plants, said Kody Bessent, chief executive of Plains Cotton Growers, a producer group whose members typically grow about a third of the U.S. crop.

Irrigated plants that would normally be up to a typical person's waist by now and bursting with bolls are just knee-high this year, he said. Consecutive years of bone-dry weather and stretches of triple-digit heat left little of the subsoil moisture that usually builds up over winter and sustains cotton plants when rain is sparse.

Though farmers have insurance to fall back on, the economic pain from the failed crop risks spreading throughout the region, to the gins that separate seeds from the cotton, the warehouses that store the bales, the mills that press cottonseed oil and the county-seat restaurants that feed farmers.

“A year like this has an astronomical impact on us,” Mr. Bessent said.

[Return to Top](#)

Cyber, Tech Awareness

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	08/17 Extremists fled to new wave apps, sites
SOURCE	https://www.propublica.org/article/welton-chang-interview-right-wing-platforms
GIST	<p>Since Donald Trump’s election in 2016, an entire ecosystem of right-wing social media platforms has come into existence — from Gab (where the alleged Pittsburgh synagogue shooter posted hateful screeds) to Parler (a hot spot for insurrectionary activities in the run-up to Jan. 6) to the former president’s own Truth Social (which was frequented by a fan of his who was recently shot to death after attacking a Cincinnati FBI office). This new wave of apps and sites follows in the footsteps of 4chan and 8kun, older internet message boards that continue to attract a sizable audience of conspiracy theorists and violent racists.</p> <p>Welton Chang knows this corner of the digital world well. A former Army intelligence officer and human rights activist, Chang runs Pyrra, a small tech startup dedicated to identifying and tracking the extremist ideas circulating in these spaces. Pyrra, which launched in early 2022 with \$1.3 million in funding, monitors more than 20 alternative social media sites and online forums, scanning some 100 million messages per week.</p> <p>Chang, a data scientist, says increased content moderation at major social media platforms — including the ouster of figures ranging from Trump to Alex Jones — has driven a sizable contingent of users to the spaces Pyrra tracks, which tend toward an absolutist view of free speech.</p> <p>This conversation has been edited for length and clarity.</p> <p>Can you tell me in simple terms what Pyrra does?</p> <p>Pyrra is a threat intelligence company. We do three things: We collect content — publicly available information — from alternative social media sites. We use machine learning and advanced algorithms to detect violent threats, hate speech and disinformation that are popping up on these platforms. And then we display that information for our clients, either through reports or through a platform that we have.</p> <p>We got our start in the human rights community. We were a project inside of Human Rights First [a U.S.-based advocacy group]. ... We spun out of HRF as our own company in December 2021 and launched our platform earlier this year.</p> <p>In general, what are the big extremist threats that you’re following these days? What worries you?</p> <p>One is just the death of critical thinking and the amount of evidence-free speculation that becomes the truth, small-t truth, on these platforms. It can be something as innocuous as something done by some celebrity all the way to things that really have impacts on the health of our democracy.</p> <p>But it’s also just the general lack of confidence in institutions writ large. ... We’re at an all-time low in terms of government trust, based on all the different metrics that are out there. ...</p> <p>[This brings us to] the inherent incoherence of conspiracy theories and these really outlandish ideas about how the world actually works. People believe that the government is simultaneously totally incompetent and also all-knowing and all-seeing and capable of pulling off a massive effort like helping Bill Gates spread the COVID vaccine through mind control via 5G technology.</p>

These are diametrically opposed ideas, yet folks are simultaneously believing both of them and saying, “This is what is happening in the world today.”

I’ve been really immersed in this stuff since 2016, and I’m still routinely appalled, surprised and taken aback by some of the things I read on these platforms. And maybe the day I become inured to this stuff is the day I need to leave the biz. But I’m still really shocked by the things I read.

Look at the Pew Research polls that are out there about how many people believe the core tenets of QAnon. I think we’ve entered a new phase in which social media has altered and warped how we encounter information, how we process it, how we internalize what counts as the truth. It’s having significant impacts on our democracy.

I really do believe that social media is an accelerator. ...

An accelerator of societal disintegration?

Yes, yes, exactly.

You had an interesting Twitter thread about the disinformation you’re seeing around the Jan. 6 committee. Can you tell me about that?

On these alternative social media platforms, the narrative about Jan. 6 started getting pushed on Jan. 7. People started by [saying it was antifa that was responsible](#). That got amplified by more mainstream characters, even Tucker Carlson talked about antifa maybe having a role in Jan. 6.

Right off the bat they were trying to deflect blame. You had card-carrying members of the MAGA community like [Jan. 6 protester] Ray Epps getting falsely accused of being FBI informants and being responsible for pushing people into the Capitol. He came out and said, “I was one of them [the pro-Trump movement], and they just kind of turned on me.”

All it takes is a single user on one of these platforms to write something outlandish without any factual basis or evidence. They’re not citing anything, they’re not looking at any hardcore piece of information or they’re taking things out of context. And that just gets endlessly amplified by other users. People who are not sophisticated consumers of information see that on these platforms, and they go: “I agree with that. That sounds plausible. It’s now the truth for me.”

If you ask people, “Who was responsible for Jan. 6?” significant numbers of people will tell you antifa had a role in Jan. 6. Multiple credible investigations have shown that antifa had no role in Jan. 6. ... Yet this maintains a consistent narrative, and that narrative started spinning basically as soon as people were cleared from the Capitol building.

In the past that’s the kind of thing that would’ve happened on Twitter. But now it starts on the smaller platforms. It may eventually migrate to Twitter. But Twitter and the larger platforms actually do some content moderation, making it harder for this stuff to gain traction or get picked up.

These smaller places either don’t have the resources to do content moderation or don’t have the will to do it. They are allowing these narratives to fester and gain traction and eventually jump hosts.

Out of all the alternative social media apps and sites, which seem to be the most successful? Where is the energy?

It’s still 4chan. ... One secret about 4chan is they actually have to do a significant amount of content moderation now — where they remove posts because of how bad and violent they are. There’s a massive amount of people on 4chan on a regular basis, who are frequent flyers on the boards. It’s still crazy there.

More than Telegram, an instant messenger service?

Telegram is also huge. Right now we track thousands of Telegram channels, but that’s just a drop in the bucket.

HEADLINE	08/16 Brazil federal police target Lapsus\$ Group
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/brazilian-police-launch-investigation-targeting-lapsus-group/
GIST	<p>Brazil's Federal Police carried out eight search and seizure warrants Tuesday as part of an investigation into attacks claimed by the Lapsus\$ Group that disrupted the country's Ministry of Health last December, the agency announced in a press release.</p> <p>Police did not specifically name Lapsus\$ Group in the announcement. However, the details described line up with the Lapsus\$ Group attack and the agency wrote that the investigation connected the attacks to a "transnational criminal organization" focused on cybercrime "targeting public and private entities in Brazil, the United States, Portugal and Colombia."</p> <p>In addition to the Ministry of Health, Brazilian police wrote, the attacker infiltrated nine other local entities — including the Ministry of the Economy and the National Electric Energy Agency.</p> <p>The Ministry of Health website displayed a message directing the agency to Lapsus\$ Group for their data during the attack, Reuters reported, and updates related to the incident were posted to the group's Telegram channel.</p> <p>The apparent attempt at extortion was the first attack the group publicly took credit for. But in the coming months, Lapsus\$ claimed responsibility for a string of breaches — including ones at Microsoft, chipmaker Nvidia, and single sign-on provider Okta.</p> <p>The group used a variety of different techniques to carry out its attacks.</p> <p>"Their tactics include phone-based social engineering; SIM-swapping to facilitate account takeover; accessing personal email accounts of employees at target organizations; paying employees, suppliers, or business partners of target organizations for access to credentials and multifactor authentication (MFA) approval; and intruding in the ongoing crisis-communication calls of their targets," Microsoft wrote, following its breach investigation.</p> <p>The group also seemed to behave erratically — seeking publicity and posting to recruiting insiders with access to upcoming targets, Microsoft noted.</p> <p>Some alleged members of the group were soon reported to be teenagers — including one in Oxford who was doxxed in an episode of hacker drama, according to Bloomberg. U.K. law enforcement arrested seven people, ages ranging from 16 to 21, in March for alleged involvement in the Lapsus\$ Group.</p> <p>The group continued to post for several days after the arrests, including about a data breach at Globant and an apparent joke about some of its members going on vacation. However, its public Telegram channel has been silent since late March. The Federal Police declined to comment on the operation beyond the information in the press release.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/16 Deadly swatting increasing on Twitch
SOURCE	https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2022/08/deadly-swatting-increasing-on-twitch-alarmed-streamers-press-for-change/
GIST	<p>Twitch has faced scrutiny for how it helps streamers targeted by extreme hate campaigns. Last year, the livestreaming service started suing users conducting "hate raids" that rely on bots to spew a continual barrage of hate speech. These raids, Twitch's lawsuit says, have been "targeting black and LGBTQIA+ streamers with racist, homophobic, sexist, and other harassing content." Now, vulnerable users are hoping that Twitch will use its heft to stop some of the deadliest attacks affecting marginalized users on the platform: swatting that has reportedly been increasing since 2015 and that now happens multiple times a week.</p>

These swatting attacks are conducted by anonymous persons making prank calls to police, falsely reporting emergency circumstances (like an armed potential mass shooter or a hostage situation that doesn't exist) in order to get SWAT teams to descend, guns out, on a Twitch streamer's location. [The Washington Post reported](#) this week that these swattings appear to be intensifying and can be traumatizing for targeted Twitch streamers. One trans Twitch streamer told the Post that [police in London aimed an assault rifle at her face](#).

Official attempts to prevent swatting

Back in 2017, a person who was an unintended target died after a swatting sent officers to the wrong address. The Twitch user who set up that swatting, Casey Viner, was sentenced to 15 months in prison, while the man whom Viner hired to place the prank call, Tyler Barriss, was [sentenced to 20 years](#).

Since then, local and state governments have taken some steps to prevent swattings. Seattle created [a police anti-swatting service](#) to help Twitch users warn police of potential false reports. Those efforts helped lead Washington state to enact an [anti-swatting law in 2020](#), and other states have followed that example. Kentucky [passed a law earlier this year](#) making it a Class D felony to file false reports "involving danger to life or property" if they incite police to react. That means prank callers can be heavily penalized for initiating a police response or leading officers to circulate false allegations that are likely to cause public alarm.

"Imagine having your local police department's tactical response team surround your home in preparation of breaking down the door in what they believe is a rescue or hostage situation, only to learn that this was someone's idea of a joke?" Phillip Pratt (R-Ky.), who sponsored the Kentucky anti-swatting bill, told me. "That's exactly what happened in my community in March of 2021 and in other cities across the nation over the past few years. Not only is this a dangerous misuse of our first responders, but it has also led to the death of innocent people."

Maximum penalties for prank callers under anti-swatting laws are not as extreme as Barriss' sentence. Under the Kentucky law, victims are eligible to receive damages, including for emotional distress, and anyone sentenced risks up to five years in prison. US Senator Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) previously sought to pass a federal law to increase that [maximum sentence to eight years](#), but it stalled. [Another attempt at passing an anti-swatting law](#) was introduced in Congress in 2019, but so far, it has gone nowhere.

Without federal guidance, costs could prevent states from pursuing these sorts of cases. Tracking down offenders making false reports can be excessively expensive. Law enforcement who arrested Barriss [estimated that it cost \\$100,000](#) to identify "just one hoax caller." It's difficult because, the Post notes, "harassers can use software to spoof phone numbers and IP addresses," and this can effectively mask their identities.

However, states may realize that more resources need to be dedicated, especially since the practice appears to be targeting more users more often. The Post reported four attacks this week alone—which is a lot, considering that the Kentucky law was enacted after [an estimated 10 attacks occurred within a year](#). Schumer's bill was based on [21 attacks](#) in a single New York county back in 2014. While swattings are not exclusively a Twitch problem—[users on Twitter](#) and other online platforms are vulnerable, too—Twitch is among the most visible, mainly because some SWAT raids are [livestreamed to wide audiences](#).

What can Twitch do?

Some targeted US Twitch streamers in Texas, California, Florida, and Ohio, as well as some in Canada and the UK, told the Post they want to see the platform take stronger action to prevent swatting. However, Twitch seems to mostly direct users concerned about swatting to work with law enforcement. Some critical streamers think Twitch can do more, suggesting that "Twitch could create a system of its own to preemptively inform police departments of potential swatting victims."

That may be difficult, though. Twitch told the Post that "it faces restrictions in the sorts of personal information it can responsibly provide to any party — law enforcement included." From Twitch's

	<p>statement, it's unclear how many other options Twitch has for stepping in or how often the platform has collected information signifying criminal intent that it has not acted on.</p> <p>Twitch did not immediately get back to Ars with comment.</p> <p>One potential solution to the problem of swatting might be a database of potential swatting targets that law enforcement could rely on to identify potential targets. Users could register their location in the database as at high risk of being falsely reported, and police could cross-check the database before sending in a SWAT team. Anti-swatting databases aren't a perfect solution, though, because some people don't want to be added to a police list; if the list were leaked, an already-traumatized user might be re-targeted.</p> <p>Twitch says that it is taking action "against Twitch users who have committed egregious, violent off-service offenses." In response to swatting reports, the company has "quadrupled the size" of its global law enforcement response team "over the past two years" as its "audience has grown." That team "works 24/7 to build relationships with local and national law enforcement officials and assist swiftly with criminal data requests that can shed light on law enforcement investigations."</p> <p>These efforts, however, are reactive—cooperating with police investigations after an attack. As swatting increases, something national and more proactive may be needed.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	08/16 NKorea hackers targeting job seekers
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2022/08/north-korea-hackers-spotted-targeting.html
GIST	<p>The North Korea-backed Lazarus Group has been observed targeting job seekers with malware capable of executing on Apple Macs with Intel and M1 chipsets.</p> <p>Slovak cybersecurity firm ESET linked it to a campaign dubbed "Operation In(ter)ception" that was first disclosed in June 2020 and involved using social engineering tactics to trick employees working in the aerospace and military sectors into opening decoy job offer documents.</p> <p>The latest attack is no different in that a job description for the Coinbase cryptocurrency exchange platform was used as a launchpad to drop a signed Mach-O executable. ESET's analysis comes from a sample of the binary that was uploaded to VirusTotal from Brazil on August 11, 2022.</p> <p>"Malware is compiled for both Intel and Apple Silicon," the company said in a series of tweets. "It drops three files: a decoy PDF document 'Coinbase online careers 2022_07.pdf', a bundle 'FinderFontsUpdater.app,' and a downloader 'safariFontAgent.'"</p> <p>The decoy file, while sporting the .PDF extension, is in reality a Mach-O executable that functions as a dropper to launch FinderFontsUpdater, which, in turn, executes safariFontAgent, a downloader designed to retrieve next-stage payloads from a remote server.</p> <p>ESET stated that the lure was signed on July 21 using a certificate issued in February 2022 to a developer named Shankey Nohria. Apple has since moved to revoke the certificate on August 12.</p> <p>It's worth noting the malware is cross-platform, as a Windows equivalent of the same PDF document was used to drop an .EXE file named "Coinbase_online_careers_2022_07.exe" earlier this month, as revealed by Malwarebytes researcher Hossein Jazi.</p> <p>The Lazarus Group has emerged an expert of sorts when it comes to posing as HR representatives on social media platforms like LinkedIn to target companies that are of strategic interest.</p> <p>Last month, it came to light that the \$620 million Axie Infinity hack attributed to the collective was the result of one of its former employees getting duped by a fraudulent job offer on LinkedIn.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	08/16 Signal discloses Twilio hack impact
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/signal-discloses-impact-twilio-hack
GIST	<p>Secure communications services provider Signal on Monday disclosed impact from the recent Twilio hack, after threat actors attempted to re-register the phone numbers of some of its users to new devices.</p> <p>Earlier this month, enterprise software vendor Twilio announced that it fell victim to a cyberattack, after threat actors tricked one of its employees into revealing their login credentials.</p> <p>Armed with the employee's credentials, the threat actor accessed internal systems that contained customer data. Overall, the data of 125 customers was impacted in the incident, Twilio said on Wednesday.</p> <p>"There is no evidence that customer passwords, authentication tokens, or API keys were accessed without authorization," the company said.</p> <p>The enterprise communication API powerhouse also said that it has improved the security of internal systems, and that the threat actors are relentless in their social engineering attempts.</p> <p>Signal, which contracted Twilio for phone number verification services, is one of the customers impacted by the incident.</p> <p>In an August 15 notice, the secure messaging company announced that, after gaining access to Twilio's customer support console, the attackers attempted to re-register the phone numbers of certain Signal users to new devices, or accessed their Signal SMS verification code.</p> <p>"During the window when an attacker had access to Twilio's customer support systems it was possible for them to attempt to register the phone numbers they accessed to another device using the SMS verification code. The attacker no longer has this access, and the attack has been shut down by Twilio," Signal announced.</p> <p>The company also notes that the incident impacted roughly 1,900 of its users, and that the attackers did not have access to users' contact list, message history, profile information, list of blocked numbers, or other personal information.</p> <p>"Message history is stored only on your device and Signal does not keep a copy of it. Your contact lists, profile information, whom you've blocked, and more can only be recovered with your Signal PIN which was not (and could not be) accessed as part of this incident," Signal notes.</p> <p>The company also points out that the attackers were able to send and receive Signal messages on behalf of the impacted users after registering their accounts to new devices. Signal says that the attackers specifically searched for three numbers – out of the total 1,900 – and that they re-registered at least one.</p> <p>Signal says it's in the process of alerting potentially impacted users via SMS. For all 1,900 accounts, the company has unregistered all devices and is asking users to re-register them.</p> <p>The secure communications firm is encouraging users to enable 'registration lock' on their accounts, a feature that adds an extra layer of protection to accounts, preventing this kind of telecom attacks.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/16 Exploit out for critical Realtek flaw
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/exploit-out-for-critical-realtek-flaw-affecting-many-networking-devices/
GIST	Exploit code has been released for a critical vulnerability affecting networking devices with Realtek's RTL819x system on a chip (SoC), which are estimated to be in the millions.

The flaw is identified as CVE-2022-27255 and a remote attacker could exploit it to compromise vulnerable devices from various original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), ranging from routers and access points to signal repeaters.

No user interaction needed

Researchers from cybersecurity company Faraday Security in Argentina discovered the vulnerability in Realtek's SDK for the open-source eCos operating system and [disclosed the technical details](#) last week at the DEFCON hacker conference.

The four researchers ([Octavio Gianatiempo](#), [Octavio Galland](#), [Emilio Couto](#), [Javier Aguinaga](#)) credited with finding the vulnerability are computer science students at the University of Buenos Aires.

Their presentation covered the entire effort leading to finding the security issue, from picking a target to analyzing the firmware and exploiting the vulnerability, and automating the detection in other firmware images.

[CVE-2022-27255](#) is a stack-based buffer overflow with a severity score of 9.8 out of 10 that enables remote attackers to execute code without authentication by using specially crafted SIP packets with malicious SDP data.

Realtek addressed the issue in March [noting](#) that it affects rtl819x-eCos-v0.x series and rtl819x-eCos-v1.x series and that it could be exploited through a WAN interface.

The four researchers from Faraday Security have developed proof-of-concept (PoC) [exploit code for CVE-2022-27255](#) that works on Nexxt Nebula 300 Plus routers.

They also shared a video showing that a remote attacker could compromise the device even if remote management features are turned off.

The researchers note that CVE-2022-27255 is a zero-click vulnerability, meaning that exploitation is silent and requires no interaction from the user.

An attacker exploiting this vulnerability would only need the external IP address of the vulnerable device.

Few lines of defense

Johannes Ullrich, Dean of Research at SANS says that a remote attacker could exploit the vulnerability for the following actions:

- crash the device
- execute arbitrary code
- establish backdoors for persistence
- reroute network traffic
- intercept network traffic

Ullrich warns that if an exploit for CVE-2022-27255 turns into a worm, it could spread over the internet in minutes.

Despite a patch being available since March, [Ullrich warns](#) that the vulnerability affects "many (millions) of devices" and that a fix is unlikely to propagate to all devices.

This is because multiple vendors use the vulnerable Realtek SDK for equipment based on RTL819x SoCs and many of them have yet to release a firmware update.

It is unclear how many networking devices use RTL819x chips but the RTL819xD version of the SoC was present in products from more than 60 vendors. Among them ASUSTek, Belkin, Buffalo, D-Link, Edimax, TRENDnet, and Zyxel.

	<p>The researcher says that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devices using firmware built around the Realtek eCOS SDK before March 2022 are vulnerable • You are vulnerable even if you do not expose any admin interface functionality • Attackers may use a single UDP packet to an arbitrary port to exploit the vulnerability • This vulnerability will likely affect routers the most, but some IoT devices built around Realtek's SDK may also be affected <p>Ulrich created a Snort rule here that can detect the PoC exploit. It looks for "INVITE" messages with the string "m=audio" and triggers when there are more than 128 bytes (size of the allocated buffer by the Realtek SDK) and if none of them is a carriage return.</p> <p>Users should check if their networking equipment is vulnerable and install a firmware update from the vendor released after March, if available. Other than this, organizations could try to block unsolicited UDP requests.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	08/16 Microsoft workers expose login credentials
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/m7gb43/microsoft-employees-exposed-login-credentials-azure-github
GIST	<p>Multiple people who appear to be employees of Microsoft have exposed sensitive login credentials to the company's own infrastructure on GitHub, potentially offering attackers a gateway into internal Microsoft systems, according to a cybersecurity research firm that found the exposed credentials.</p> <p>Microsoft confirmed the data exposure when contacted by Motherboard. Microsoft owns GitHub.</p> <p>"We continue to see that accidental source code and credential leakages are part of the attack surface of a company, and it's becoming more and more difficult to identify in a timely and accurate manner. This is a very challenging issue for most companies these days," Mossab Hussein, chief security officer at cybersecurity firm spiderSilk which discovered the issue, told Motherboard in an online chat. SpiderSilk has previously discovered an exposed list of Slack channels belonging to Electronic Arts; the personal information of WeWork customers uploaded by WeWork developers; and that education giant Elsevier exposed users' passwords.</p> <p>Hussein provided Motherboard with seven examples in total of exposed Microsoft logins. All of these were credentials for Azure servers. Azure is Microsoft's cloud computer service and is similar to Amazon Web Services. All of the exposed credentials were associated with an official Microsoft tenant ID. A tenant ID is a unique identifier linked to a particular set of Azure users. One of the GitHub users also listed Microsoft on their profile.</p> <p>Three of the seven login credentials were still active when spiderSilk discovered them, with one seemingly uploaded just days ago at the time of writing. The other four sets of credentials were no longer active but still highlighted the risk of workers accidentally uploading keys for internal systems.</p> <p>Microsoft refused to elaborate on what systems the credentials were protecting when asked multiple times by Motherboard. But generally speaking, an attacker may have an opportunity to move onto other points of interest after gaining initial access to an internal system.</p> <p>One of the GitHub profiles with exposed and active credentials makes a reference to the Azure DevOps code repository. Highlighting the risk that such credentials may pose, in an apparently unrelated hack in March attackers gained access to an Azure DevOps account and then published a large amount of Microsoft source code, including for Bing and Microsoft's Cortana assistant.</p> <p>Regarding the fresh credential exposure, a Microsoft spokesperson told Motherboard in an email that "We've investigated and have taken action to secure these credentials. While they were inadvertently made public, we haven't seen any evidence that sensitive data was accessed or the credentials were used improperly. We're continuing to investigate and will continue to take necessary steps to further prevent inadvertent sharing of credentials."</p>

HEADLINE	08/16 Saudis jail woman to 34yrs for using Twitter
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/16/saudi-woman-given-34-year-prison-sentence-for-using-twitter
GIST	<p>A Saudi student at Leeds University who had returned home to the kingdom for a holiday has been sentenced to 34 years in prison for having a Twitter account and for following and retweeting dissidents and activists.</p> <p>The sentencing by Saudi's special terrorist court was handed down weeks after the US president Joe Biden's visit to Saudi Arabia, which human rights activists had warned could embolden the kingdom to escalate its crackdown on dissidents and other pro-democracy activists.</p> <p>The case also marks the latest example of how the crown prince Mohammed bin Salman has targeted Twitter users in his campaign of repression, while simultaneously controlling a major indirect stake in the US social media company through Saudi's sovereign wealth fund, the Public Investment Fund (PIF).</p> <p>Salma al-Shehab, 34, a mother of two young children, was initially sentenced to serve three years in prison for the "crime" of using an internet website to "cause public unrest and destabilise civil and national security". But an appeals court on Monday handed down the new sentence – 34 years in prison followed by a 34-year travel ban – after a public prosecutor asked the court to consider other alleged crimes.</p> <p>According to a translation of the court records, which were seen by the Guardian, the new charges include the allegation that Shehab was "assisting those who seek to cause public unrest and destabilise civil and national security by following their Twitter accounts" and by re-tweeting their tweets. It is believed that Shehab may still be able to seek a new appeal in the case.</p> <p>By all accounts, Shehab was not a leading or especially vocal Saudi activist, either inside the kingdom or in the UK. She described herself on Instagram – where she had 159 followers – as a dental hygienist, medical educator, PhD student at Leeds University and lecturer at Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University, and as a wife and a mother to her sons, Noah and Adam.</p> <p>Her Twitter profile showed she had 2,597 followers. Among tweets about Covid burnout and pictures of her young children, Shehab sometimes retweeted tweets by Saudi dissidents living in exile, which called for the release of political prisoners in the kingdom. She seemed to support the case of Loujain al-Hathloul, a prominent Saudi feminist activist who was previously imprisoned, is alleged to have been tortured for supporting driving rights for women, and is now living under a travel ban.</p> <p>One person who knew Shehab said she could not stomach injustice. She was described as well-educated and an avid reader who had arrived in the UK in 2018 or 2019 to pursue her PhD at Leeds. She had returned home to Saudi Arabia in December 2020 on a holiday and had intended to bring her two children and husband back to the UK with her. She was then called in for questioning by Saudi authorities and eventually arrested and tried for her tweets.</p> <p>A person who followed her case said Shehab had at times been held in solitary confinement and had sought during her trial to privately tell the judge something about how she had been handled, which she did not want to state in front of her father. She was not permitted to communicate the message to the judge, the person said. The appeals verdict was signed by three judges but the signatures were illegible.</p> <p>Twitter declined to comment on the case and did not respond to specific questions about what – if any – influence Saudi Arabia has over the company. Twitter previously did not respond to questions by the Guardian about why a senior aide to Prince Mohammed, Bader al-Asaker, has been allowed to keep a verified Twitter account with more than 2 million followers, despite US government allegations that he orchestrated an illegal infiltration of the company which led anonymous Twitter users to be identified and jailed by the Saudi government. One former Twitter employee has been convicted by a US court in connection to the case.</p>

One of Twitter's biggest investors is the Saudi billionaire Prince Alwaleed bin Talal, who owns more than 5% of Twitter through his investment company, Kingdom Holdings. While Prince Alwaleed still serves as chairman of the company, his control over the group faced questions in the US media, including the Wall Street Journal, after it emerged that the Saudi royal – a cousin of the crown prince – had been held captive at the [Ritz Carlton in Riyadh for 83 days](#). The incident was part of a broader purge led by Prince Mohammed against other members of the royal family and businessmen, and involved allegations of torture, coercion and expropriation of billions in assets into Saudi coffers.

In a 2018 [Bloomberg interview of Prince Alwaleed](#), which was conducted in Riyadh seven weeks after his release, the billionaire acknowledged he had reached a “confirmed understanding” with the Saudi government, apparently in connection to his release, which was confidential.

More recently, [Kingdom Holding announced in May that it had sold about 17% of its company to the PIF](#), where Prince Mohammed serves as chairman, for \$1.5bn. That, in turn, makes the Saudi government a significant indirect investor in Twitter. According to Twitter, investors do not play a role in managing the company's day-to-day business.

The European Saudi Organization for Human Rights condemned Shehab's sentence, which it said was the longest prison sentence to ever be brought against any activist. It noted that many female activists have been subjected to unfair trials that have led to arbitrary sentences and have been subjected to “severe torture”, including sexual harassment.

Khalid Aljabri, a Saudi who is living in exile and whose sister and brother are being held in the kingdom, said the Shehab case proved Saudi Arabia's view that dissent equates to terrorism.

“Salma's draconian sentencing in a terrorism court over peaceful tweets is the latest manifestation of MBS's ruthless repression machine,” he said, referring to the crown prince. “Just like [journalist Jamal] Khashoggi's assassination, her sentencing is intended to send shock waves inside and outside the kingdom – dare to criticise MBS and you will end up dismembered or in Saudi dungeons.”

While the case has not received widespread attention, the Washington Post on Tuesday [published a scathing editorial](#) about Saudi Arabia's treatment of the Leeds student and said her case showed that “commitments” the president had received on reforms were “a farce”.

“At the very least, Mr. Biden must now speak out forcefully and demand that Ms. Shehab be released and allowed to return to her sons, 4 and 6 years old, in the United Kingdom, and to resume her studies there,” it read.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/17 Ukraine foils ambitious Russia cyberattack
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/08/17/world/ukraine-russia-news-war#the-operator-of-ukraines-nuclear-plants-says-it-faced-an-ambitious-cyberattack
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine — The Ukrainian energy agency responsible for the oversight and safe operation of the nation's nuclear power plants said on Tuesday night that Russian hackers had launched their most ambitious effort yet on the company's official website.</p> <p>The attack appeared to fail and there was no indication that it threatened to disrupt the Ukrainian power grid or the company's oversight of the nation's 15 working nuclear reactors.</p> <p>The company, Energoatom, said it had managed to keep the attack from being visible to users of the website. Even so, it was a reminder of the digital threat posed to the power infrastructure in Ukraine, where the shelling of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant has stirred global alarm.</p>

Ukraine's power grid has been knocked offline twice before, in 2015 and 2016, causing widespread blackouts, and Russian efforts to attack the Energoatom site were being closely watched in case they presaged a larger event.

The large-scale cyberattacks — like knocking out Ukraine's power grid or frying cellular service — that Western intelligence officials worried would accompany the Russian invasion in February have failed to materialize. But Russia has used hacking campaigns to support its ground campaign, pairing malware with missiles in several attacks, including on TV stations and government agencies, according to a report released in April by Microsoft.

Ukrainian officials said this spring that they had thwarted a cyberattack on Ukraine's power grid that could have knocked out power to two million people, raising fears that Moscow was continuing to persist in its digital efforts to advance its military campaign.

Daily shelling at the Zaporizhzhia complex — Europe's largest nuclear power plant — has sparked international concerns about the possibility of a meltdown. The United Nations has offered to help send nuclear inspectors to the site, which is occupied by Russian forces but being operated by Ukrainian workers, if both sides agree.

It remains unclear who is to blame for the shelling. The Ukrainians have accused the Russians of directing strikes there to cut off energy supplies to other cities, while the Russians say Ukraine is responsible for the attacks.

On Tuesday, President Emmanuel Macron of France and President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine spoke by telephone about safety threats at the Zaporizhzhia plant. According to a statement from Mr. Macron's office, the French president stressed his concern about the "ongoing clashes on the safety and security of Ukrainian nuclear facilities" and called for the withdrawal of Russian forces.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Seattle PD links car thefts to TikTok videos
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/seattles-rising-kia-car-thefts-linked-to-tiktok-videos-police-say/
GIST	<p>A series of TikTok videos may be behind a recent spike in Kia car thefts in Seattle, according to police.</p> <p>Seattle police said they investigated 36 reports of stolen Kias last month — compared with five in July last year — and believe thieves may be using a method learned from tutorial videos on how to use other tools in place of a key.</p> <p>Police are advising Kia owners to park in lighted or secure areas when possible and look into steering wheel locks and aftermarket ignition kill-switch systems.</p> <p>The vehicles recently stolen were Kia models Optima, Soul, Sorento, Forte and Sportage, and all were manufactured between 2014-2021, according to the Seattle police.</p> <p>Two teens were arrested this month after police received a report that several people in a Kia — later determined to have been stolen — had pulled up on a residential street on northwest Capitol Hill and tried to steal a second Kia.</p> <p>Officers arrived and spotted the suspects, who sped away and crashed into a fence in the 900 block of East Newton Street, police said.</p> <p>The three occupants of the Kia fled on foot, police said, but two boys were caught: a 16-year-old and a 17-year-old who was carrying a loaded "ghost gun," assembled from a firearm kit sold online.</p> <p>Officers arrested the two teens on investigation of unlawful possession of a firearm and possession of a stolen vehicle, police said.</p>

	<p>In a separate incident weeks later on July 21, officers recovered a stolen Kia in South Seattle and later found evidence linking the theft to the same 16-year-old from the Capitol Hill incident, police said.</p> <p>Police said the teen had reportedly learned to steal Kias from a series of videos on TikTok.</p> <p>Police continue to receive reports of stolen Kias.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/16 Scammers sneaky trick bypass spam filters
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/scammers-are-using-this-sneaky-trick-to-bypass-spam-filters-and-trick-you-into-handing-over-your-sensitive-information/
GIST	<p>There's been a big rise in cyber criminals combining fraudulent emails and telephone calls to trick victims into disclosing sensitive information like passwords and bank details.</p> <p>Known as vishing attacks, criminals and scammers telephone victims and attempt to use social engineering to trick them into giving up personal data.</p> <p>Common scams involve attackers claiming to be from the victim's bank, the police, or even cybersecurity or software companies. Often, they use scare tactics to encourage victims to give up information like bank information or passwords as a matter of urgency.</p> <p>The attackers can even engineer the telephone number and caller ID to look legitimate, making their claims more convincing.</p> <p>Now, in an effort to make vishing attacks look even more legitimate, cyber criminals are using what cybersecurity researchers at Agari, by HelpSystems describe as 'hybrid' vishing attacks. These are different to regular vishing attacks because they use multiple different stages, first contacting the victim with a phishing email lure containing a phone number that they're asked to call.</p> <p>The emails will often claim a state of urgency in order to panic the target into calling the number – for example, it could claim that you're about to be locked out of your bank account, or a transaction has been made without your permission and you should call the number to talk to the bank.</p> <p>When the victim calls, they're connected to a scammer claiming who attempts to extract sensitive information from them under the false pretences of helping the victim rectify the false problem they've been told they have. Unlike many phishing emails, the messages don't contain attachments or malicious links, so they're more easily able to bypass spam filters and anti-virus protections.</p> <p>According to research by Agari, there's been a 625% in hybrid vishing attacks over the last year.</p> <p>"These emails are particularly adept at getting past attack controls because they lack the typical links or attachments that are flagged by security teams, and instead initiate attacks on customers via phone numbers. This not only evades security teams but also catches busy users off guard," John Wilson, senior fellow responsible for threat research at Agari told ZDNET.</p> <p>The attacks also exploit the rise in hybrid working, as scammers are aware that people are more likely to be working remotely – which might make them more vulnerable to cyber attacks or being manipulated by social engineering.</p> <p>"With the increase of work-from-home employees, threat actors know that many of their targets no longer work near an internal expert within an office setting that they can turn to, to help validate the email, and while most scams promote a sense of urgency, employees will oftentimes act before thinking twice, so they can productively work through their daily tasks," Wilson explained.</p>

	<p>Researchers warn that vishing and other email-based phishing attacks will continue to be a problem – but there are steps with organisations can take to help prevent attacks.</p> <p>"Capabilities to automatically detect and remove threats from all infected employee inboxes before users can interact with them also plays a critical role, as well as a proper security training regimen, to prepare users to be on the lookout for such threats," said Wilson.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/16 Ransomware group extorts wrong company
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/ransomware-group-claims-access-scada-confusing-uk-water-company-hack
GIST	<p>A ransomware group has hit at least one water company in the United Kingdom, but there is some confusion over whose systems were actually breached.</p> <p>The Cl0p ransomware group has claimed on its Tor-based leak website that it has breached the systems of Thames Water, which advertises itself as the UK's largest water and wastewater company, serving 15 million people.</p> <p>However, cybersecurity experts have pointed out that while Cl0p names Thames Water on its site, the files leaked as proof of the breach actually appear to belong to a different water company named South Staffordshire, whose subsidiaries, South Staffs Water and Cambridge Water, serve 1.6 million people and tens of thousands of businesses in the UK.</p> <p>On its website, Cl0p names Thames Water with the company's address and revenue, but a phone number and a second address shown on the same page belong to South Staffs Water. Some leaked documents also reference South Staffordshire and South Staffs Water.</p> <p>At least one local British news website posted an alarmist headline — now removed — warning about possible water contamination resulting from the alleged Thames Water hack.</p> <p>Thames Water issued a statement on Tuesday saying that the media reports are false. Also on Tuesday, South Staffordshire confirmed being targeted by cybercriminals.</p> <p>South Staffordshire provided few details, but said the incident disrupted its corporate IT network and claimed that its ability to supply safe water has not been affected "thanks to the robust systems and controls over water supply and quality we have in place at all times".</p> <p>South Staffordshire reassuring customers about the safety of the water supply and the alarmist headlines are related to the hackers claiming to have gained access to all of the company's systems, including SCADA (supervisory control and data acquisition) systems that, according to the cybercriminals, "control chemicals in water".</p> <p>"It would be easy to change chemical composition for their water but it is important to note we are not interested in causing harm to people," the cybercriminals said.</p> <p>Two of the screenshots they published do show human-machine interface (HMI) systems that could potentially allow someone to tamper with industrial control systems (ICS), but some HMIs are only used for monitoring purposes. One of the screenshots shows HMIs that seem to relate to wastewater treatment.</p> <p>Ilan Barda, CEO of OT cybersecurity firm Radiflow, has confirmed for <i>SecurityWeek</i> that the screenshots are from a real HMI system and that they can be used to control the chemicals in the water purification process.</p>

“However, such chemical processes are non-linear - minor changes can quickly drift the desired pH level out of safety ranges. So to maintain a usable pH level, it is required to have a real-time managed control loop which is done in the PLC level. As such configuration changes via the HMI will be detected and alerted at the PLC level and are unlikely to cause damage to the output water supply,” Barda explained.

“Note however that when an attacker gains access to such an internal OT computer they can also install a hidden malware that will further spread in the internal OT network and might eventually reach assets in which it can cause real damage,” he added. “So even though the site might remain operational it is highly recommended to perform an in-depth cyber inspection of all the assets for such additional dormant malwares.”

The cybercriminals claim to have stolen more than 5 Tb of information after spending months in the company’s networks. They also claim that files have not been encrypted — as in many other attacks — and that the victim did offer to pay a ransom, but the amount was too low.

Hundreds of companies have been targeted by the ClOp ransomware and NCC Group reported recently that many of [its victims are in the industrial sector](#). Several people accused of having some type of role in the ClOp operation have been [arrested](#), but that does not appear to have had a big impact.

It’s not uncommon for threat actors to target companies in the water sector, and ransomware groups have been [known to access SCADA systems](#) in these organizations. While in some cases the attackers might not know too much about how the compromised ICS works, there are some threat actors that [know exactly](#) what they are doing.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Cryptocurrency crimes decline in 2022
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/plunge-value-cryptocurrency-crimes-decline-2022
GIST	<p>The dramatic decline in cryptocurrency has dampened activity around specific types of financial crimes — most significantly, investment scams and illegal Dark Web transactions — leading to a drop in consumer losses for the first half of 2022.</p> <p>That's according to an analysis published on Aug. 16 from blockchain data provider Chainalysis.</p> <p>Overall, the cumulative revenue collected by scammers dropped by two-thirds — 65% — for the first seven months of the year, according to the firm. The decline is only partly linked to the decrease in the value of major cryptocurrencies. Bitcoin, for example, plunged in value by 51% between Jan. 1 and July 31, and that still doesn't account for the total drop.</p> <p>The number of deposits connected to scams also dropped by more than two-thirds, suggesting that fewer consumers were falling prey to those efforts, says Kim Grauer, director of research at Chainalysis.</p> <p>"Most scams are investment scams, and if investments across the board are down, then less funds will flow to the services that are, in fact, scams," she says. "We also saw a lot of law enforcement wins in the past year which have further deterred scammers."</p> <p>Since their peak last November, major cryptocurrencies have dropped precipitously in value, reaching lows in June. Bitcoin dropped nearly 72%, from its \$67,567 close on Nov. 7, 2021, to \$19,018 on June 17. Similarly, Ethereum plunged nearly 80% to close at about \$994 on June 17. Both digital assets have recovered from those lows in the past two months.</p> <p>Cryptocurrency is the financial backbone of most online crimes, Chainalysis stated in its midyear update, so the drop in cryptocurrency has impacted other major cybercrimes, such as money laundering and ransomware. Both have dropped by 20% to 25% since the beginning of the year, according to cybersecurity firms.</p>

That said, crimes that do not depend on enticing victims with cryptocurrency have been less affected by the volatility. Business e-mail compromise (BEC), for example, still accounted for 35% of the dollar losses in 2021, compared with 0.7% for ransomware, [according to the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center \(IC3\)](#).

"Nobody likes a crypto bear market, but the one silver lining is that illicit cryptocurrency activity has fallen along with legitimate activity, albeit not as sharply," the company stated. "This is especially encouraging in scams, where the decrease in market hype seems to mean fewer are fooled by scammers, and in darknet markets, where law enforcement's [shutdowns of major markets] appears to have dampened the entire sector."

DeFi Services Still Hot Targets

One constant? Hacking of digital wallets and decentralized financial (DeFi) services continued to grow. Overall, cybercriminals stole at least \$1.9 billion in cryptocurrency through hacking online services so far in 2022, an increase of about two-thirds from the same period in 2021.

The majority of the hacking profits comes from [hacking DeFi protocols](#), Chainalysis stated in the mid-year report.

"DeFi protocols are uniquely vulnerable to hacking, as their open source code can be studied ad nauseum by cybercriminals looking for exploits — though this can also be helpful for security as it allows for auditing of the code," the company stated. "[I]t's possible that protocols' incentives to reach the market and grow quickly lead to lapses in security best practices."

Specific regions have also focused on specific types of crime. North Korean nation-state actors have compromised specific DeFi protocols, leading to massive gains for the sanctioned government. The attackers stole approximately \$1 billion so far in 2022, accounting for the majority of the \$1.9 billion in losses from exchanges and services, as of July 2022.

"We have seen ransomware attacks coming out of North Korea, but right now DeFi hacking is the most profitable thing for the North Korean hacking organizations to carry out," Grauer says. "North Korean hacking organizations have realized how profitable this type of hacking can be if done correctly, so have continued to carry out attacks throughout 2022."

Financial institutions, consumers, and cybersecurity professionals should not expect the decline in fraud related to cryptocurrency to continue, Chainalysis stressed. Consumers need to be better educated about the risks, while the cybersecurity of decentralized financial protocols needs to be bolstered and audited. Finally, legitimate exchanges should have protections in place to prevent the transfer of money to known scams, and law enforcement should develop their capabilities to seize cryptocurrency from bad actors, the company stated.

[Return to Top](#)

Terrorism, Extremism

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	08/17 Belgian jihadism: thing of the past?
SOURCE	https://www.brusselstimes.com/272891/belgian-jihadism-a-thing-of-the-past
GIST	<p>Belgium hasn't seen any major terrorist attacks since 2016 and Belgium's Coordination Unit for Threat Analysis (CUTA) rates the actual terror threat as two out of four – far lower than previously.</p> <p>Yet this is not to say that the threat has disappeared, with one Arabic studies researcher cautioning that terrorist groups are still active in the country: "You always have to assume that there will be people inspired by terror groups," said Pieter Van Ostayen of KU Leuven in De Morgen. "The threat level in Belgium remains at two. That means there is always a possibility of new attacks."</p>

Van Ostayen manages a database with 2,189 names of Belgian jihadist fighters. But keeping track of the people on file is a complicated affair.

"In that database are 130 Belgian fighters who we don't know whether they are still alive. It could be that they are still in Syria or maybe they have found another terrain in the meantime. In the next few years, more and more Syrian fighters will also return. Those who have been convicted here will also be released and it is difficult to tell whether they have been deradicalised."

Van Ostayen mentions one man who was part of the Islamic State (IS) and is currently detained in Norway. Until recently, he had spread radical messages online.

"Look also at Jean-Louis Denis (a radical Islamist preacher) who recruited Syria fighters. He was convicted but was released in 2018. He has even admitted that he may now be more radical than ever."

Islamism in 2022

The Taliban [reclaimed power in Afghanistan one year ago](#) and the country is once again becoming a hotbed for terrorist groups. Despite the death of al-Qaeda leader Al Zawahiri, the group is still alive, Van Ostayen argues.

"When the Taliban took over Afghanistan, al-Qaeda also got an enormous boost", said Van Ostayen. On the question of who its next leader will be, he believes that "the most likely candidate is the former Egyptian army colonel Sayf Al Adl. He is already an old hand in al-Qaeda and is even said to have been responsible for raising Hamza bin Laden, Osama's son."

Al-Qaeda is active in Yemen and Mali, with a growing presence in Somalia and the Indian subcontinent, "but the leadership of the organisation is in Afghanistan."

"Maybe some al-Qaeda fighters will now join IS. Everything depends on who the new leader will be," continued Van Ostayen. "If it is a charismatic figure, I think al-Qaeda's influence will grow again."

Belgium: a base for Islamic terrorism in the 2010s

The 2016 bombings highlighted Belgium as a base for Islamic terrorism. Many foreign fighters were radicalised in Belgium before joining wars in the Middle East. In June 2016, 451 fighters joined the Syrian Civil War, making Belgium the country with highest number of foreign fighters per capita.

135 individuals of 12 different nationalities were linked to terrorism, according to a report from the Combating Terrorism Center. Of these, 65% had Belgian citizenship; 33% were either Moroccan citizens or had family from there.

In 2014, the Jewish Museum in Brussels was attacked by an Islamic terrorist, killing four. The November 2015 attacks in Paris were planned in Brussels, while in 2016, Brussels's Maelbeek metro and Zaventem airport were attacked, killing 35.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Pakistani pleads guilty to terrorism charge
SOURCE	https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/us-news/2022/08/16/pakistani-doctor-pleads-guilty-to-terrorism-charge-in-us/
GIST	<p>A Pakistani doctor and former Mayo Clinic research co-ordinator pleaded guilty on Tuesday to a terrorism charge, more than two years after he was arrested for telling FBI informants that he pledged his allegiance to ISIS and wanted to carry out lone wolf attacks in the US.</p> <p>Online court records show Muhammad Masood pleaded guilty to one count of attempting to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organisation.</p> <p>A sentencing date has not been set.</p>

	<p>US prosecutors say Masood was in the US on a work visa.</p> <p>They said that starting in January 2020, Masood made statements to paid informants, who he believed were ISIS members, pledging his allegiance to the group and its leader.</p> <p>Prosecutors said Masood expressed his desire to travel to Syria to fight for ISIS and to carry out lone wolf attacks in the US.</p> <p>The Mayo Clinic has previously confirmed Masood was a former employee at the medical centre in Rochester, Minnesota, but was not employed there at the time of his arrest.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	08/17 Jihadists spread: Sahel to West Africa coast
SOURCE	https://www.thedefensepost.com/2022/08/17/jihadists-spread-sahel-west-africa/
GIST	<p>Their campaign began in northern Mali a decade ago, advanced into the country's powder-keg center and from there into neighboring Niger and Burkina Faso.</p> <p>Now, fears are growing that the ruthless jihadists wreaking havoc in the Sahel are heading towards coastal West Africa.</p> <p>Following multiple incursions including deadly attacks in the northern regions of Benin, Ivory Coast, and Togo, governments in the Gulf of Guinea are reviewing their strategy.</p> <p>Their chief concerns, say analysts: how to avoid replicating the mistakes of their neighbors in the Sahel, and how best to muster foreign support.</p> <p>After Mali's junta took power in August 2020, the country's ties with Paris went into a downward spiral, triggering a withdrawal of French troops that was completed on Monday.</p> <p>Last month, Benin President Patrice Talon told his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron that his country needed more equipment, especially drones.</p> <p>Among coastal states, northern Benin has been the most affected by the expanding jihadist threat, with around 20 attacks against security forces since late 2021.</p> <p>"What we are going through is terrifying," a Beninese officer deployed at the border with Burkina Faso told <i>AFP</i>, speaking under condition of anonymity.</p> <p>"We wake up every morning without knowing if we will survive the day," he added.</p> <p>Macron has said that France, despite its exit from Mali, is committed to the "fight against terrorism" in West Africa.</p> <p>He said he is ready to participate in meetings of the "Accra Initiative" — a body set up in 2017 to boost security cooperation between countries in the region.</p> <p>Recruitment</p> <p>"The deteriorating security situation in Burkina Faso and Mali has made the north of the coastal countries the new front line against armed groups operating in the Sahel," the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, a German think tank, said in a report in April.</p> <p>Countries in the region have beefed up security in vulnerable areas, including Ghana, which so far has been spared attacks.</p> <p>But whether this will work is the big question.</p>

Shoring up border security will be “ineffective, (just) as it was in the Sahel,” the Moroccan Policy Center for the New South think tank warned this month.

[Jihadist groups in the Sahel](#) “are not traditional armies,” it said. “They spread ideas and exploit the grievances of target populations.”

Jeannine Ella Abatan at the pan-African Institute for Security Studies in Senegal described the rash of recent attacks as “the tip of the iceberg.”

“Since 2019, studies on the Sahel show that extremist groups were already connected to coastal states, either for logistical or operational support, but also for financing,” she told *AFP*.

Militants do not occupy territory in the coastal countries but instead infiltrate northern regions where they conduct sophisticated attacks, Abatan said.

Togo first experienced a jihadist attack in May 2021. Benin’s first known fatal attack was last December, when two soldiers were killed near the border with Burkina Faso. In Ivory Coast, four members of the security forces died in 2021, after 14 in 2020.

Such attacks, said Abatan, are only possible thanks to good intelligence-gathering capabilities and the “complicity” of locals.

Increased recruitment among border populations is a major threat, she said.

“The difficult living conditions can easily encourage desperate people into the camps of terrorists,” a Beninese police officer in the troubled region told *AFP*.

Last week, a widely-shared propaganda video featuring two jihadists speaking Bariba, the local language in northern Benin, called on people to join them and threatened those who collaborate with the state.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Taliban seized \$7B US-supplied weapons
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/aug/16/more-7-billion-us-provided-weapons-seized-taliban/
GIST	<p>More than \$7 billion worth of U.S.-supplied military hardware, ranging from howitzers to sniper rifles, fell into the hands of the Taliban in Afghanistan when the American-backed government in Kabul swiftly collapsed amid the U.S. pullout a year ago.</p> <p>In a report released Tuesday, the Defense Department’s Inspector General said the U.S. government provided almost \$85 billion in security assistance to Afghan forces from 2005 to 2021. About \$18.6 billion of it funded the procurement of weapons and equipment over the years.</p> <p>The Taliban seized more than \$923 million worth of military aircraft; \$4.1 billion worth of ground vehicles; and more than \$511 million worth of weapons when they took control of Afghanistan, according to the report.</p> <p>Also left behind were Humvees and heavy Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles.</p> <p>“The Afghan forces were heavily reliant on U.S. contractor support to maintain both their aircraft and ground vehicle fleets,” the Pentagon IG said. “Without this continued support, the long-term operability of these assets would be limited.”</p> <p>The Defense Department also provided more than 427,000 weapons for the Afghan military and security forces, including more than 258,000 rifles; 56,000 machine guns; 244 howitzers; and 31,000 rocket-propelled grenade launchers. Pentagon officials told the Inspector General that more than 316,000 of the weapons — worth \$511.8 million — were in Afghan military hands when the government fell.</p>

	<p>“Their operational condition was unknown,” the inspector general’s report stated.</p> <p>The Taliban also seized an unknown quantity of other defense-related items such as communications equipment; explosive ordnance detection and disposal supplies, night vision devices, and other surveillance equipment, officials said.</p>
Return to Top	

Suspicious, Unusual

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	08/17 Lake Mead: 5th set human remains found
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/08/17/Lake-Mead-remains-discovered/1281660723399/
GIST	<p>Aug. 17 (UPI) -- Another set of human remains has been discovered in Lake Mead, officials said, marking the fifth time since May that such a discovery has been made in the lake as it experiences historically low water levels.</p> <p>The National Park Service said in a statement Tuesday that the human skeletal remains were located in the lake's Swim Beach area and reported to rangers at about 8 p.m. the night prior.</p> <p>A perimeter has since been established to recover the remains with help from the dive team for the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, it said.</p> <p>No further information about the remains were made public, but the park service said the investigation into them is ongoing.</p> <p>The discovery marks the fifth time since May that human remains have been discovered in the lake. It also marks the third set of remains to be found in Swim Beach.</p> <p>The first set of remains was discovered early May in a barrel in what is believed to be a homicide.</p> <p>Days later, a second body was discovered by a couple paddleboarding on the lake.</p> <p>A third set was found in late July followed by a fourth set discovered earlier this month.</p> <p>The announcement of the discovery of a fifth set of remains came as the Biden administration on Tuesday announced it was cutting water supplies from the Colorado River to six neighboring states, including Arizona and Nevada, in order to protect its long-term sustainability as it has dropped to record levels.</p> <p>Lake Mead, a manmade reservoir on the Colorado River, has also been a victim of drought cycles over the past two decades that have seen it drop for near full capacity in 2000 to about a quarter full last month, according to NASA.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/17 'Rainbow fentanyl' seized in Portland
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/us/rainbow-fentanyl-seized-portland-drug-spreading-west-coast-officials
GIST	<p>A bag of the more potent powdered fentanyl was confiscated from a home in Portland, and authorities are warning that the drug could be making its way across the West Coast.</p> <p>Deputies discovered body armor, \$5,000 in cash, nine guns of which some were stolen and drugs. The drugs including meth, heroin, 800 pills of fentanyl and four grams of multi-colored, powdered fentanyl, often called "rainbow fentanyl."</p>

	<p>"We are partnering with Multnomah County health departments to sound the alarm," Special Investigation Unit Sergeant Matt Ferguson said in a statement.</p> <p>"The public needs to be aware of the rising use of powdered fentanyl. We believe this is going to be the new trend seen on the streets of Portland," he continued.</p> <p>Authorities are particularly worried about young adults or children ending up with rainbow fentanyl, as they could mistake the drug for something else, like candy or a toy, because of its color, Fox 12 reported.</p> <p>The powdered fentanyl found at the Portland home resembles the color and consistency of sidewalk chalk.</p> <p>Powdered fentanyl generally has a higher potency than other forms of the drug. The colorful fentanyl powders are unfamiliar to most law enforcement agencies.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	08/17 Cities blight: nitrogen dioxide pollution
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/aug/17/major-cities-blighted-by-nitrogen-dioxide-pollution-research-finds
GIST	<p>Cities in relatively prosperous countries are blighted by serious levels of air pollution from nitrogen dioxide, often without realising the extent of the problem, research has found.</p> <p>Moscow is the world's second worst city for nitrogen dioxide pollution, behind Shanghai in China, while St Petersburg takes fourth place. Other cities near Russia follow close behind, including Ashgabat, capital of Turkmenistan, and Minsk, capital of Belarus, at seventh and eighth place respectively, according to the research, published on Wednesday.</p> <p>Pallavi Pant, senior scientist at the Health Effects Institute in the US, who oversaw the research, said: "Finding several Russian cities at the top of the list [for NO₂ air pollution] was definitely surprising for us. It is likely to mainly come from traffic pollution and a vehicle fleet that is older."</p> <p>Other cities worst affected by NO₂ pollution included Tehran in Iran, Cairo in Egypt, Istanbul in Turkey and Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam.</p> <p>While the problem of particulate pollution – caused by very fine pieces of soot or debris, mostly from burning and some industrial sources – has been an increasing cause of concern around the world, the problem of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) pollution has been less well studied, with limited on-the-ground monitoring stations capable of detecting the gas.</p> <p>Scientists from the Health Effects Institute in the US used satellite data, along with on-the-ground read-outs, to compile a global picture of fine particulate (PM2.5) and NO₂ air pollution in more than 7,000 cities globally, for the State of the Global Air report.</p> <p>They found that while poorer countries tended to be plagued by pollution from particulates – very fine pieces of unburnt carbon or debris, mostly from burning or industrial sources – the problem of NO₂ pollution was less well studied.</p> <p>The worst cities for particulate pollution – which can come from coal-fired power stations, the burning of waste and agricultural burning, as well as from vehicles – were Delhi and Kolkata in India, followed by Kano in Nigeria and Lima in Peru. South Asia and Africa dominated the Top 10, with Dhaka, Karachi and Jakarta, Lago and Accra also on the list, while Beijing was ninth worst globally.</p> <p>Robert O'Keefe, the vice-president of the Health Effects Institute, said: "China has continued to make progress this decade on air pollution. It shows that there is hope, things can go in the right direction, though this is a long-term trip."</p>

Return to Top	<p>According to the report, 18 of the top cities showing the steepest declines in NO₂ exposure over the past decade were in China.</p> <p>NO₂ is not as closely linked to mortality as particulate pollution, but can cause a variety of respiratory problems, including the onset of asthma in children, and exacerbate breathing difficulties for those already susceptible. Deaths have been linked to the pollution, though on a lesser scale than pollution caused by particulates.</p> <p>Vehicles are the main source of nitrogen dioxide pollution, and older vehicles produce far more than more modern models.</p> <p>The State of the Global Air report is published annually by HEI.</p> <p>It has previously found that air pollution, both outdoor and indoor, was so widespread that nearly all people experienced it in some form, and that babies were dying across the world from it. This year's edition focused on NO₂ for the first time as scientists were concerned about the lack of knowledge of the issue.</p> <p>While about 117 countries have ground-level monitoring systems to track PM2.5, only 74 monitor NO₂. This year's study focused on NO₂ levels from 2010-2019, to give a picture of the underlying problem of air pollution, avoiding the effect of the Covid-19 lockdowns.</p> <p>The authors also estimate that in 2019, at least 1.7 million deaths linked to PM2.5 exposure occurred in the 7,239 cities they covered. The impact was worst in Asia, Africa and eastern and central Europe.</p>
-------------------------------	---

HEADLINE	08/16 Atlantic hurricane seasons start earlier
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/severe-weather-threatens-coastal-residents-as-hurricane-seasons-shift-earlier-11660662027?mod=hp_listb_pos3
GIST	<p>The Atlantic hurricane season is now beginning weeks earlier than in previous decades as a result of rising ocean temperatures, researchers said in a paper published Tuesday in the journal Nature Communications.</p> <p>The researchers said that with the first tropical storms of each year forming about five days earlier per decade since 1979, residents along the East and Gulf coasts should brace for the possibility of severe weather as early as mid-May.</p> <p>“The concern isn’t that we’re going to get a Category 3 on Memorial Day,” Ryan Truchelut, president and chief meteorologist of the Florida-based consulting firm WeatherTiger and the study’s lead author, said in reference to a storm ranking midway along the official 1-to-5 scale of hurricane strength. “The concern is people are kind of underestimating the risks posed to life and property by heavy rainfall from tropical cyclones” that might occur earlier in the year.</p> <p>Since 1965, the National Weather Service has designated June 1 as the official start of hurricane season. But historical records, satellite imagery and ocean-temperature data assessed as part of the new research show that the first tropical storm of the season now tends to form around May 28. Before 1979, the study shows, the season’s first storm tended to form around July 6.</p> <p>The study also shows that the date of the first tropical storm to reach the U.S. mainland has shifted from roughly Aug. 1 in 1900 to roughly July 7 today. Tropical storm activity continues to peak in September, according to the study, with few storms forming after Nov. 30, which marks the end of hurricane season.</p> <p>“We’ve seen early-forming storms in many of the last seven or eight years, and this study has quantified that and shows us that yes, there actually is something there,” said Dr. Clark Evans, professor of atmospheric sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, who wasn’t involved in the study. “It’s not just our perception.”</p>

Tropical storms begin as low-pressure weather systems in the western Atlantic, Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico, strengthening as they draw heat from the ocean and atmosphere. Storms whose maximum sustained winds reach 39 miles an hour are designated tropical storms by the weather service and given names. [Tropical storms become hurricanes](#) once their maximum sustained winds reach 74 miles an hour.

Even if they don't become hurricanes, tropical storms can be hazardous, said study co-author Dr. Phil Klotzbach, a senior research scientist in the department of atmospheric science at Colorado State University. "Flooding can be one of the largest drivers of both fatalities as well as property damage," he said.

Seven early season tropical storms have formed in the Atlantic before June 1 since 2012, even though none was officially deemed a hurricane. Of those, five hit the U.S. mainland, including Alberto in 2018. Its flooding killed eight people in North Carolina and Virginia, 10 in Cuba and caused an estimated \$125 million in U.S. property damage.

The weather service last year began weighing the possibility of moving the opening date of the hurricane season to May 15, but no decision has been made, according to a spokeswoman for the National Hurricane Center, a division of the service.

The shift in the timing of tropical storms coincides with and is caused by a [continuing trend of rising temperatures](#) in the North Atlantic Ocean, according to the researchers, who said they had ruled out increases in atmospheric water vapor and shifts in direction of high-altitude winds as causes.

The new study didn't link rising ocean temperatures to human-induced climate change. But many studies [have made such a link](#). And a 2021 report issued by the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said that emissions of [carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases](#) were causing the world's oceans to absorb heat and that global warming was causing tropical storms and hurricanes to be more intense and to cause greater rainfall.

Along Florida's Panhandle, residents of Walton County now get notices from local emergency officials to prepare for hurricane season beginning in early May, according to Jeff Goldberg, director of emergency management for the county. He said he worries about getting sufficient notice of when tropical storms are approaching and from where.

"We have seen tropical systems develop in December, in January and in March," he said. "I don't care how many storms are predicted. I care about the one that is forming."

Earlier tropical storms mean cruise ship passengers need to be more flexible with their plans and to consider buying travel insurance, said James Van Fleet, chief meteorologist for the Miami-based cruise line [Royal Caribbean International](#).

"Somebody booking a cruise in mid-May might not think they have any hurricanes to worry about," Mr. Van Fleet said. "I think our guests will want to start getting their head around in the years to come that it's not just June through September."

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said in an August update to its outlook that it expects an above-average hurricane season this year, with 14 to 20 tropical storms, of which six to 10 could become hurricanes.

[Return to Top](#)

Crime, Criminals

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	08/17 El Salvador gang crackdown tallies 50,000
----------	---

SOURCE	https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220817-arrest-tally-in-el-salvador-gang-crackdown-reaches-50-000
GIST	<p><i>San Salvador (AFP) – El Salvador has arrested some 50,000 suspected gang members since President Nayib Bukele launched a "war" in March on criminal groups terrorizing the country, the head of the country's police force announced Tuesday.</i></p> <p>"We can inform the Salvadoran people that we have already reached 50,000 recorded detentions during the period of the emergency regime," said Mauricio Arriaza, director of the National Civil Police.</p> <p>Arriaza, as well as Justice Minister Gustavo Villatoro and Defense Minister Rene Merino appeared Tuesday at parliament to request an extension of the emergency powers, which have done away with the need for arrest warrants.</p> <p>They were first enacted in March and have been prolonged on a month-by-month basis.</p> <p>The small Central American country has also increased sentences for gang membership five-fold, to up to 45 years.</p> <p>To house part of the detainees, Bukele ordered the construction of a gigantic prison for 40,000 gang members in a rural area of the city of Tecoluca, in the center of the country, which should be ready before the end of the year.</p> <p>"The results of the emergency regime have been overwhelming, we have had a strong impact on these terrorist structures," Villatoro said Tuesday in his report on the gang crackdowns.</p> <p>Almost 69 percent of the detainees are accused of belonging to the notorious Mara Salvatrucha gang -- also known as MS-13 -- followed by the Surenos faction of the Barrio 18 gang (17.7 percent) and the Revolucionarios faction of the same group (12.7 percent).</p> <p>Rights groups have denounced the arbitrary arrest of many people, including minors, with no gang links. In different operations, the police and the army have seized more than a million dollars, in addition to 1,283 weapons.</p> <p>More than 1,500 vehicles, as well as drugs and cell phones, have also been seized.</p> <p>The wave of detentions is unprecedented in the country of 6.5 million people, who have suffered decades of violent crime driven by powerful gangs such as MS-13 and Barrio 18.</p> <p>These gangs count some 70,000 members, most of them now behind bars, according to the authorities.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/17 Thailand restive south: arson, bombings
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/thailands-restive-south-hit-by-wave-of-arson-and-bombings/
GIST	<p>HAT YAI, Thailand (AP) — A wave of arson and bombing attacks overnight hit Thailand's southernmost provinces, which for almost two decades have been the scene of an active Muslim separatist insurgency, officials said Wednesday.</p> <p>At least 17 attacks occurred Tuesday night in Pattani, Narathiwat and Yala provinces, mostly at convenience stores and gas stations, military spokesperson Pramote Promin said. Three civilians were reported injured. There have been no claims of responsibility.</p> <p>More than 7,300 people have been killed since the insurgency began in 2004 in the three provinces, the only ones with Muslim majorities in Buddhist-dominated Thailand. Attacks have also taken place in neighboring Songkhla province.</p>

Muslim residents have long charged they are treated like second-class citizens in Thailand, and separatist movements have been periodically active for decades. Heavy-handed crackdowns have fueled the discontent.

The attacks are the most high-profile ones since early April, when the Thai government and BRN — Barisan Revolusi Nasional Melayu Patani, believed to be the biggest of several insurgent groups— agreed to halt violence during the Muslim holy period of Ramadan. In other violence since then, two Thai army ordnance experts on duty were killed by a bomb later that month.

Pramote said the attackers Tuesday night “dressed up as women, using motorcycles and in many cases using petrol bombs, throwing them into the target sites.”

“It is clear that the insurgents remain committed to using violence on people, damaging confidence in the economy, creating uncertainty and undermining the government system,” he said.

Police Capt. Sarayuth Kotchawong said he received a report shortly before midnight that a suspect had entered a convenience store at a gas station in Yala’s Yaha district, placed a black bag inside and warned employees to leave if they “do not want die.” The workers left before the bag exploded 10 minutes later.

The various southern insurgent groups have not issued a consensus demand. They are a shadowy mix of veteran separatists and often loosely led groups of violent young militants. Their goals range from greater autonomy to independence, with little indication they are related to jihadist movements in other Southeast Asian countries, such as Indonesia and the Philippines.

Peace talks have been ongoing for several years under the auspices of the Malaysian government between Thai officials and Mara Patani, an umbrella body representing several insurgent groups. In January 2020, Thai officials held their first formal meeting in years with BRN representatives.

Although BRN is considered the most influential of the separatist groups, local members operate with some autonomy. They generally stage hit-and-run attacks, such as drive-by shootings and ambushes with roadside bombs. They are also known for occasional coordinated attacks when seeking to make a political point with a show of strength.

There has been occasional large-scale bloodletting. In November 2019, gunmen killed 15 village defense volunteers and wounded five security personnel in what was believed to be the deadliest attack on government forces since the separatist rebellion began.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 HSI targets human trafficking in King Co.
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3598664/homeland-security-local-law-enforcement-stop-rampant-human-trafficking/
GIST	<p>Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) continues to crack down on human trafficking in King County, particularly in high-profile spots like Aurora Ave., as the organization has made 70 trafficking arrests this year in the Pacific Northwest.</p> <p>“We continue to see sex trafficking continuing in all the different cities across the Pacific Northwest in general,” HSI Seattle Lead Agent Robert Hammer said on the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH. “And then we also have labor trafficking going on in various areas, primarily in southern Oregon and Eastern Washington.”</p> <p>Hammer said these trafficking victims find themselves in these situations due to a myriad of reasons, including substance abuse issues, trouble at home, or being a runaway juvenile.</p> <p>“Fraud, force, or coercion are the three main factors that we really focus on when looking at our investigations to see if somebody’s being swindled, tricked, or manipulated,” Hammer said. “Are you being taken against your will and you can’t get out of that situation? Anything like that? Those are some of the big things that we see here in this region.”</p>

On average, 300 people buy sex along Aurora Avenue in King County every day, according to HSI Special Agent Jayme McFarland. McFarland and her team give out bags full of essentials to women who may be victims of trafficking, including resources and contact information.

HSI is working with federal law enforcement agencies of various sizes to mitigate and stop human trafficking, including the King County Sheriff's Office and the FBI.

"We're really working together as law enforcement to get out there and understand what's going on in the streets and to understand who the traffickers are," Hammer said. "And then, we also have an opportunity. And I think this is where we need to rely heavier with our local law enforcement partners to go after the demand side, because when you have a large contingent of our local community that is out there on the streets, actively seeking to have sex with minors, in exchange for money, we need to go after those individuals, because those are predators."

It is estimated that 500 to 700 children are forced into sex work every single year in King County, according to [Port of Seattle data](#).

"Going after these traffickers requires specialized units. I mean, it's hard for your uniformed officers to be there," Hammer said. "We need these undercover operations. We need plainclothes detectives out there. And that's why we're trying to partner and augment some of this by being in there, but it is finite supply."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 July border stunner: 2,071lbs fentanyl
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/aug/16/july-border-stunner-enough-fentanyl-kill-every-ame/
GIST	<p>Fentanyl is surging across the southern border at an astronomical rate, with July's rate of seizures shattering the previous record and tripling June's rate, according to Homeland Security Department statistics released this week.</p> <p>The drugs are yet another vulnerability along a U.S.-Mexico boundary plagued by record levels of human smuggling, including 10 more terrorism suspects whom the Border Patrol nabbed in July alone.</p> <p>Customs and Border Protection reported seizing 2,071 pounds of fentanyl coming in from Mexico in July. That was 60% more than the previous record, set in April, and more than triple the 640 pounds nabbed in June.</p> <p>It almost equals the amount of fentanyl seized in all of 2019.</p> <p>That's worrisome because authorities say the number of seizures is a yardstick for the overall flow. When more fentanyl is found, more is getting through. That means a devastating amount of drugs likely breached the border last month.</p> <p>Just 2 milligrams of fentanyl is considered enough to kill. Given the drug's lethality, July's seizures would be enough to slay nearly 470 million people and amount to nearly 1½ doses for every American.</p> <p>In its response to The Washington Times, CBP pointed to several large seizures that fueled July's numbers. One GMC truck stopped by Border Patrol agents was found to have about 250 pounds of fentanyl pills. CBP officers also stopped a GMC Yukon entering from Mexico and found more than 100 pounds hidden inside bags of flour, and cans of ground coffee and powdered milk.</p> <p>Federal authorities have increasingly sounded alarm bells over what they are seeing from the border.</p> <p>Mr. Grossman's area is ground zero for the chaos.</p>

Of the nearly 2,100 pounds of fentanyl seized in July, two-thirds came through Southern California. The majority, more than 1,100 pounds, was nabbed as smugglers toted it through border crossings, tucked inside cars and trucks, or hidden on their bodies.

Border Patrol agents are finding an increasing amount in attempts to smuggle it between the border crossings, or when drivers are caught at highway checkpoints deeper into the U.S.

San Diego is seeing the ramifications.

Mr. Grossman said the county medical examiner recorded a 2,375% increase in fentanyl-related deaths from 2016 to 2021.

CBP said it is expanding its use of technology to try to stop drug smuggling at U.S.-Mexico border crossings.

“Fentanyl is a more recent category of drug and we continue to see more of it on a daily basis,” the agency said in a statement to The Times.

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that in orders of magnitude is stronger than heroin. It is often added to other drugs to boost potency, cut costs and make it easier to sustain addictions — and to overdose.

It began seeping into the illicit drug market a decade ago, chiefly supplied through the mail by China.

Congress moved to crack down on those shipments, and President Trump issued a direct demand to China’s leadership in 2018 to stop it.

President Xi Jinping agreed to stop shipments to the U.S., but something was left unsaid in the conversation.

“Xi never agreed to stop sending it to Mexico,” Sen. Bill Hagerty, Tennessee Republican, told The Washington Times earlier this year after a trip to the southern border. Mr. Hagerty was the U.S. ambassador to Japan at the time and was on the phone listening to the call.

Now the precursor ingredients are shipped from China to Mexico, where the smuggling cartels process them into fentanyl and sneak the finished product across the border.

The problem may soon get worse.

China this month announced it would stop cooperating on blocking shipments of fentanyl to the U.S. as part of its retaliation over House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan.

It’s not clear whether that will affect the flows and relieve pressure at the border.

For now, the situation remains a crisis.

The administration’s critics say the flow of drugs is tied to the record surge of illegal immigrants. Border authorities are overwhelmed with the number of people, creating gaps in the line that smugglers exploit.

Agents say cartels send large groups of migrants specifically to occupy agents and then slip through high-value drugs such as fentanyl.

That makes the seizure numbers all the more worrying, said Sen. Rob Portman of Ohio, the top Republican on the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee.

“This is only the fentanyl that is being seized as the vast majority is getting through undetected, according to the DEA,” he said.

Across the country, CBP's heroin seizures were up 8% in July and methamphetamine seizures were up 15%. Both drugs are chiefly trafficked at the land borders.

Seizures of cocaine, which is less of a land-smuggled drug, were down 56%.

Drugs weren't the only warning sign from the border last month.

Border Patrol agents nabbed another 10 people whose names popped in the terrorist screening database, bringing the total to 66, with two months to go in the federal fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30.

By contrast, agents recorded just 15 terrorism suspect arrests at the southern border in all of 2021 and 11 for the four years before that combined.

CBP has not offered an explanation for the increase, but experts say that, just like drugs, when more people are caught, more are likely to get through.

"Anybody who actually knows or has a fear they're on the watch list, they're coming through those gaps and holes," Rodney Scott, a former chief of the Border Patrol, told The Washington Times this summer.

He described the alarming numbers as "beyond red flares. Those are rocket flashes going on."

Immigrant rights advocates object to tying the fentanyl crisis to illegal immigration at the southern border.

America's Voice, a leading activist group, said it was an attempt to "falsely scapegoat migrants seeking asylum."

"Migrants are not responsible for the fentanyl entering the country, nor are they an invading force," Zachary Mueller, the group's political director, said late last month.

"These dehumanizing lies already have a significant body count and are motivating some Americans to grotesque acts of mass violence," he said.

July's border numbers did contain some good news.

Overall illegal crossings of people appeared to tick down to just under 200,000.

CBP Commissioner Chris Magnus took credit, saying it appears the administration's effort to discourage migrants is working.

"This marks the second month in a row of decreased encounters along the Southwest border. While the encounter numbers remain high, this is a positive trend and the first two-month drop since October 2021," he said.

He pointed to an ad campaign this spring warning would-be migrants about the dangers of the journey as a factor in cutting the flow of people.

Still, his agency's numbers suggested things aren't so rosy.

The number of "unique individuals" — those who haven't tried to cross in the previous year — rose 1% in July from June.

CBP often touts the unique individual number as a better sense of what's happening at the border, given the high rate of recidivism because of the Title 42 pandemic border-closure policy.

HEADLINE	08/16 Judge tosses plea deals in spy couple case
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/16/us/politics/spy-couple-toebbe-submarine-jail.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — A federal judge on Tuesday threw out the plea agreements for a Maryland couple who had tried to sell submarine secrets to a foreign country, saying that the prison time for one of the defendants was less than some low-level drug dealers receive.</p> <p>The couple, Jonathan and Diana Toebbe, originally pleaded guilty in February to charges that they took part in a conspiracy to sell submarine secrets. Their plot had started to unravel almost as soon as they put it in motion, when Brazilian intelligence officials turned over to the F.B.I. a letter the couple had anonymously written in 2020, offering to sell nuclear secrets. The disclosure began a lengthy effort to learn the couple’s identity and retrieve the secrets they stole.</p> <p>Mr. Toebbe had agreed to a deal that would send him to prison for 12 years, while Ms. Toebbe agreed to serve three years, which would have likely freed her in two years.</p> <p>The judge’s decision forced the Toebbes to withdraw their pleas, and Judge Gina M. Groh of Federal District Court for the Northern District of West Virginia set a trial date for January. Lawyers will now have to see if they can reach a new plea agreement that Judge Groh might accept or continue to trial.</p> <p>In her comments, Judge Groh suggested that she would only accept a deal within the sentencing guidelines. That is likely to mean that both Mr. and Ms. Toebbe would face prison time of more than 15 years. A sentence that long could prompt Ms. Toebbe to go to trial to see if a jury would acquit her.</p> <p>The case captivated many. It combined spy book tradecraft the couple tried to use, memory cards hidden in peanut butter sandwiches, gum wrappers and Band-Aid boxes, with the strains of suburban life, like frantic searches for babysitters so they could make a dead drop.</p> <p>But the case also raised questions about why a couple with a comfortable life in a middle-class neighborhood of Annapolis, Md., would risk everything to try to sell secrets to a foreign government. In court, a lawyer for Ms. Toebbe referred to personal difficulties with which she had to grapple, without elaborating further.</p> <p>Even as the Tuesday hearing began, Judge Groh expressed skepticism about the plea deals, suggesting that the agreement would let Ms. Toebbe out of prison far too soon.</p> <p>Judge Groh said Ms. Toebbe’s crime made her “a felon of the worst kind, that is why the 36 months troubles me.”</p> <p>“There are lower-level drug dealers that go to prison for way longer than 36 months,” the judge said.</p> <p>Both prosecutors and defense lawyers argued the agreed deals were fair. In Ms. Toebbe’s case, she would never be able to work as a teacher and would be long separated from her children.</p> <p>“She will be someone who will live the rest of her life with this scarlet letter on her,” said Barry P. Beck, a lawyer for Ms. Toebbe.</p> <p>Prosecutors noted that Mr. Toebbe, who had been trained on both nuclear propulsion and handling classified data, bore the bulk of the responsibility. But they added that he had cooperated with the Navy’s efforts to do a damage assessment and the information he had passed along was classified only as confidential, not as secret or top secret.</p> <p>“His post-plea cooperation was substantial, very substantial,” said Jarod J. Douglas, an assistant United States attorney. “It was critical to a larger assessment of that defendants conduct which we may have never known. The Navy would never have known what his conduct was, and what its scope was, without his cooperation.”</p>

But Judge Groh was unconvinced. After a recess, she read from an impact statement submitted by Vice Adm. William Houston of the Navy that outlined the damage the Toebbes had done to the submarine fleet and national security.

“The nation has spent billions of dollars developing naval nuclear propulsion technology,” Judge Groh said, reading from the statement. “Mr. Toebbe’s actions have compromised the integrity of this protected information, thereby undercutting the military advantage afforded by decades of research and development.”

The information Mr. Toebbe stole from the Navy, the statement said, could give foreign navies the opportunity to close the gap with the United States, something that would take extraordinary effort and resources to restore.

After the hearing, Edward B. MacMahon, a lawyer for Ms. Toebbe, said the defense would get back to work on the case.

“We thought this plea represented a fair resolution of the case and are disappointed the judge did not accept it,” Mr. MacMahon said.

Evidence presented earlier in the trial showed Mr. Toebbe [wrestling with questions about what country](#) to approach, with Ms. Toebbe having fewer qualms.

Ms. Toebbe, a high school teacher with a Ph.D. in archaeology, had been deeply critical of President Donald J. Trump and had openly mused about leaving the United States, former students said. But defense lawyers for Ms. Toebbe noted a distaste for Mr. Trump or the state of American politics was hardly unusual.

The couple eventually [approached a country that was friendly to the United States, Brazil](#), reaching out to an intelligence service there in April 2020. But Brazilian officials notified the F.B.I., according to a senior Brazilian official and other people briefed on the investigation.

The U.S. government has never acknowledged what country the couple approached as it has tried to keep many details — including how Mr. Toebbe stole the secrets from the U.S. Navy Yard in Washington — out of the court record.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 DSHS to pay \$250/day to murder suspect
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/man-accused-of-seattle-light-rail-attack-now-accused-of-first-degree-murder-in-separate-case
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - The man accused of shoving a woman down the stairs at a Seattle light rail station now faces a first-degree murder charge for a beating that occurred just a few hours later.</p> <p>The King County Prosecutor's Office filed the felony charge on Tuesday. The prosecutors say 40-year-old Alexander Jay beat 31-year-old Brent Wood to death on March 3rd around 12:30 a.m.</p> <p>Jay is already accused of several violent crimes just hours before this deadly attack. Investigators say Jay attacked a woman at the light rail station on Mar. 2, 2022 breaking her ribs and her collarbone. They also say he stabbed a 30-year-old woman ten times, just 30 minutes after the first attack, Jay faced charges of first and second degree assault for these attacks.</p> <p>Jay has been held in the King County Jail since Mar. 10, however, in April a judge deemed Jay incompetent to stand trial and ordered him to spend the next three months in an inpatient facility, getting mental health treatment until he understands the charges against him.</p> <p>Months later, Jay remained in jail.</p>

In June, Judge Johanna Bender ruled the State Department of Social and Health Services must pay Jay \$250 dollars a day until he is out of jail and receiving mental health treatment.

The issue is there is no bed space available, officials with DSHS tell FOX 13 News. So, Jay sits in jail continuing to rack up tens of thousands of dollars taxpayers will have to foot.

According to DSHS, Jay is expected to get out of jail by October 2nd. At that point, the state will owe him \$36,750.

"It's ridiculous. It's not right. He shouldn't be getting money," said Nathan Wood, Brent's younger brother.

Jay is just one of [hundreds](#) of people awaiting bed space at state mental health facilities. So far, the state has paid out \$69,5000 in similar cases. This number does not include the \$36,750 expected to go to Jay.

DSHS officials say Jay has not received any money yet.

According to court documents, Jay has a criminal record dating back to 2000. His recent charges include home burglary, assault, attempted assault, and domestic violence. In total, Jay has had seven cases in King County in the last five years.

Jay is scheduled for arraignment on Aug. 29. Prosecutors argued for Jay to be held on \$650,000 for the two felony assault cases, plus another \$5 million for this murder case.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Multi-state crime spree suspect gets life
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/crime/sultan-man-gets-life-in-prison-for-multi-state-crime-spre/293-3a104f00-3358-4350-a206-7d819b4ac371
GIST	<p>COEUR D'ALENE, Idaho — A man who led police on a weeklong, multi-state manhunt and later tried to escape from jail received a life sentence.</p> <p>Jesse R. Spitzer, 30, of Sultan, Wash., pleaded guilty in July to 16 charges, most of them felonies, including four counts of aggravated assault, six counts of grand theft and one count of robbery, as reported by our news partners, the Coeur d'Alene Press.</p> <p>First District Judge Lamont Berecz handed down a sentence on Friday of life in prison with 20 years fixed. That means Spitzer will be eligible for parole when he's 50 years old.</p> <p>The sentence is the result of a Rule 11 plea deal brokered by the prosecution and defense.</p> <p>A Rule 11 plea agreement is a deal where the defendant pleads guilty to a certain charge in exchange for a certain sentence. A judge can accept or reject a Rule 11 agreement but cannot alter the terms.</p> <p>In exchange for Spitzer's guilty plea, the state dismissed 18 charges, including three counts of unlawful possession of a firearm, as well as a habitual offender enhancement.</p> <p>Spitzer was arrested in January for a string of burglaries and vehicle thefts in Washington and North Idaho.</p> <p>The crime spree began after he was suspected of stealing a vehicle in east Snohomish County on Jan. 21.</p> <p>Police and K-9s chased Spitzer into the woods near Gold Bar, Wash., the following day, but he escaped. He reappeared after a car crash in Chelan County, evading authorities again.</p>

After stealing a firearm from a vehicle in Post Falls, Spitzer led police on a foot chase and disappeared.

Officers from multiple agencies caught up with him in Kellogg the next night. He fled along eastbound I-90 in another stolen vehicle, reportedly shooting at police during the high-speed chase.

Spitzer continued into Wallace, where he carjacked a couple at gunpoint.

Law enforcement chased Spitzer over Lookout Pass and into Montana. Near the town of Haugan, he reportedly threatened officers with a handgun and bolted.

Police arrested Spitzer after finding him hiding in a camper near the \$50,000 Silver Dollar Bar and Motel.

It wasn't Spitzer's first brush with the law.

In 2011, a 19-year-old Spitzer pleaded guilty to attempted murder after shooting at a sheriff's sergeant while trying to avoid arrest in Nevada. He was sentenced to up to 22 years in prison.

After his arrest in Montana, Spitzer was booked into the Kootenai County jail and held on \$1 million bail.

In April, he reportedly pried a leg off the metal desk in his cell and used it to smash the lock on the door. Upon noticing him outside his cell, staff locked down the jail and instituted inmate escape protocols.

Spitzer reportedly surrendered after law enforcement deployed sting ball grenades, rubber bullets and tear gas.

Judge Berecz ruled later that month that Spitzer was unfit to stand trial due to mental illness.

The court committed Spitzer to care and treatment at an Idaho Department of Correction facility. His competency was deemed restored in July.

Before handing down the sentence, Berecz said Spitzer's crimes will have a lasting impact on his victims.

"It goes beyond money or loss of property," he said. "There is a violation of self."

Wallace resident Leigh Lutich Ligenza, whose car Spitzer stole at gunpoint, was present for the sentencing.

"I know he should be incarcerated, but it was very sad," she said Monday. "He seemed genuinely remorseful and apologized several times throughout, even after the judgement. I remember thinking that I wished they had shot him that night. But it's not that simple anymore."

Though Spitzer will be eligible for parole in 20 years, Berecz noted that there is no guarantee of release.

"This is up to you and your willingness to engage in treatment," he said. "Should you not, you are a risk to society and life is warranted."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Seattle Belltown neighborhood shooting
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/shooting-investigation-underway-seattles-belltown-neighborhood/RAHSLHXDPBEPHZPU4A7MNJTYA/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — An investigation is underway after a man was injured in a shooting Tuesday night in Seattle's Belltown neighborhood.</p> <p>Officers were called at about 10:15 p.m. to 3rd Avenue and Bell Street for a report of a shooting.</p>

	<p>Police said the victim was shot twice and taken to the hospital.</p> <p>No other injuries were reported.</p> <p>There's no word on what led to the shooting.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/16 Memphis hospital: 6 shot outside entrance
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/aug/16/six-shot-outside-memphis-emergency-room-entrance-m/
GIST	<p>Unknown suspects in a black SUV shot six people, including two juveniles, early Tuesday morning outside the emergency room entrance at Memphis, Tennessee's Methodist North Hospital, forcing the hospital to lockdown for several hours.</p> <p>Memphis police arrived to handle the aftermath of the shooting at 12:42 a.m., according to a statement on Twitter.</p> <p>Authorities say that the shooting took place near New Covington Pike and Austin Peay Highway. Near the hospital, police found a silver sedan with all four doors open, riddled with more than 20 bullet holes on the driver's side of the vehicle, according to Memphis ABC affiliate WATN-TV.</p> <p>Two victims were transferred to Le Bonheur Children's Hospital in Memphis in critical condition; one of the pair is no longer in critical condition, police said. The ages of these victims are unknown.</p> <p>The other four victims were transferred to Regional One Hospital in critical condition. Of those four, one is no longer in critical condition, WATN-TV reported.</p> <p>Three of the victims have been detained because the silver sedan they were driving was a stolen vehicle, police said in the statement.</p> <p>A semi-automatic rifle was also found near a gas pump at the BP station by the intersection of Raleigh LaGrange and Sycamore View roads in Memphis.</p> <p>It is unclear whether or not the two situations are related, according to Memphis CBS affiliate WREG-TV.</p> <p>Methodist North Hospital was locked down but reopened at 3 a.m.</p> <p>"Early this morning, a shooting occurred near Methodist North Hospital. No hospital employees were harmed. Six patients were treated and transported to Regional One and Le Bonheur hospitals. We appreciate the swift action from our employees to guide patients away from the ED waiting area so our security team and Memphis Police Department could respond quickly. We are working with local law enforcement who are continuing to investigate," said Sarah Farley, spokesperson for Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare. "The hospital is not on lockdown at this time,"</p> <p>Nearby roads that were locked down were reopened at around 8 a.m.</p> <p>Police said the investigation is ongoing.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	08/16 Mexico: 14th journalist slain this year
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/journalist-killed-northern-mexico-14th-die-year-88459367
GIST	<p>MEXICO CITY -- An independent journalist found dead in northern Mexico was killed by a blow to the head, authorities said Tuesday, reporting the latest in 14 slayings of Mexican reporters and media workers so far this year, the deadliest in recent memory for the profession.</p>

Prosecutors in the border state of Sonora announced earlier that the body of Juan Arjón López had been found in the border city of San Luis Rio Colorado. They said the journalist, who had been reported missing Aug. 9, was identified from the tattoos on his body.

According to the autopsy, López died from "head trauma due to a blunt blow," the state Public Ministry said in a statement.

The state's chief prosecutor, Claudia Contreras, said investigators would seek to determine if the killing was related to López's work as a journalist.

San Luis is across the border from Yuma, Arizona, and has long been known for medical and dentistry offices catering to Americans. But the area has been hit by drug cartel violence in recent years.

In March, volunteer searchers found 11 bodies in clandestine burial pits in a stretch of desert near a garbage dump in San Luis.

At the beginning of August, a journalist was among four people killed inside a beer shop in the central Mexico state of Guanajuato.

Authorities said it was unknown whether that attack was related to the journalist's work, his role as representative of local businesses in the planning of an upcoming fair or something else.

While organized crime is often involved in journalist killings, small town officials or politicians with political or criminal motivations are often suspects as well. Journalists running small news outlets in Mexico's interior are easy targets.

Mexico is considered the most dangerous country for reporters outside a war zone.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	08/16 Feds bust Mafia gambling operations in NY
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/feds-bust-alleged-mafia-gambling-operations-posing-shoe/story?id=88452362
GIST	<p>Sal's Shoe Repair in Merrick, New York, was doing more than fixing heels and worn soles.</p> <p>The Genovese organized crime family operated an illegal gambling operation out of the shop, generating "substantial revenue," which was then laundered through cash transfers, federal prosecutors in Brooklyn said.</p> <p>Nine purported members and associates of the Genovese and Bonanno organized crime families were charged Tuesday with racketeering and illegal gambling offenses for running gambling parlors out of other legitimate-seeming establishments in Queens and on Long Island, including a coffee bar and La Nazionale Soccer Club.</p> <p>Salvatore Rubino, 58, known as "Sal the Shoemaker," was among those arrested, prosecutors said.</p> <p>A Nassau County police detective, Hector Rosario, is also among the defendants. He allegedly accepted money from the Bonanno family in exchange for offering to arrange police raids of competing gambling locations, according to the indictment. He is charged with obstructing a grand jury investigation and lying to the FBI.</p> <p>"Current members of the five families demonstrate every day they are not adverse to working together to further their illicit schemes, using the same tired methods to squeeze money from their victims. Enlisting alleged assistance from a member of law enforcement also proves they are willing to do all they can to hide their illegal behavior," FBI Assistant Director-in-Charge Michael Driscoll said in a statement.</p> <p>Beginning in May 2012, the Genovese and Bonanno families jointly operated a lucrative illegal gambling operation in Lynbrook, New York, called the Gran Caffe. The profits earned through this and other</p>

	<p>gambling locations generated substantial revenue, which was then laundered through cash transfers to the defendants and through "kicking up" to the crime families' leaders, the indictment said.</p> <p>"Today's arrests of members from two La Cosa Nostra crime families demonstrate that the Mafia continues to pollute our communities with illegal gambling, extortion, and violence while using our financial system in service to their criminal schemes," U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York Breon Peace said in a statement.</p> <p>Among those charged are Anthony "Little Anthony" Pipitone, a captain and soldier in the Bonanno family, and Carmelo "Carmine" Polito, acting captain in the Genovese family, prosecutors said.</p> <p>Prosecutors detail one call Polito made in October 2019 to an associate asking him to relay a message to a debtor: "Tell him I'm going to put him under the f----- bridge."</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	08/16 Growing tide of threats against FBI, feds
SOURCE	https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-2022-august-16/
GIST	<p>Bottom Line Up Front</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the wake of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) lawful search of former President Trump's estate at Mar-a-Lago, threats against the FBI and federal law enforcement spiked, reflecting a growing tide of anti-government violent extremism. • There were also numerous attempts by individuals to "doxx" FBI agents, making public their personal information so that others could harass or target them with threats and physical violence. • Other online threats called for a "dirty bomb" to be detonated in front of FBI Headquarters, along with more general threats of impending civil war and armed rebellion. • Just over a year and a half after the January 6 Capitol insurrection, far-right extremists in the United States are once again energized and ramping up calls for violence. <p>In the wake of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) search of former President Trump's estate at Mar-a-Lago, Florida, threats against the FBI and federal law enforcement have spiked. The former President is reportedly facing potential prosecution for violating the Espionage Act and obstruction of justice after documents classified at the top secret/sensitive compartmented information (TS/SCI) level were found at his property, including extremely sensitive documents related to nuclear weapons. Subsequently, threats have been directed against FBI personnel and property, prompting the bureau and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to issue a joint intelligence bulletin laying out the range of possible threats. The bulletin comes as the latest in a series of warnings about the growing tide of anti-authority and anti-government violent extremism (AAAGVE).</p> <p>Several violent acts followed in the wake of widespread condemnations by Republican lawmakers and supporters of the federal authorities who executed the search. Last week, an individual who was known to the FBI attempted to attack its field office in Cincinnati, Ohio, and was then shot and killed in a standoff with law enforcement. There was also an armed protest outside of the FBI's Phoenix field office over the weekend. Also over the weekend, a man drove his car into a barricade at the U.S. Capitol, then fired a gunshot into the air before killing himself. FBI Director Christopher Wray addressed the issue of FBI employees' safety in a memo distributed last week, highlighting the severity and apparent credibility of the threats. There were also numerous attempts by individuals to "doxx" FBI agents, making public their personal information so that others could harass or target them with threats and physical violence. At times, former President Trump's own inflammatory rhetoric following the search has contributed to the already volatile security situation. Others have echoed his incendiary rhetoric.</p> <p>Online vitriol and threats included calls to "kill all feds" as well as exhortations of violence against a federal magistrate judge and the U.S. Attorney General, Merrick Garland. Other online threats called for a "dirty bomb" to be detonated in front of FBI Headquarters, along with more general threats of impending civil war and armed rebellion. A disinformation campaign related to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has also caught the attention of militia violent extremists (MVEs) and others, who released direct threats on social media. "Civil war" and "lock and load" were among the phrases trending on sites such as</p>

Telegram, Gab, and Reddit, in addition to Truth Social, former President Trump's social media platform, which is where the Cincinnati gunman Ricky Shiffer posted direct threats and implored others to kill federal law enforcement agents. Even elected members of Congress, including Rep. Paul Gosar (R-AZ), joined in, tweeting, "We must destroy the FBI." Other fringe political figures such as Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) called to "defund the FBI." On Monday, in his first remarks to the press since the Mar-a-Lago search, President Trump acknowledged that the "temperature has to be brought down," adding that "if there is anything we can do to help, I, and my people, would certainly be willing to do that." However, the former president has made no efforts to discourage threats against law enforcement and has actively spread mis- and disinformation regarding the search and the ongoing investigation.

Just over a year and a half after the [January 6 Capitol insurrection](#) of 2021, far-right extremists in the United States are once again energized and ramping up calls for violence. This current landscape of political violence and anti-government extremism is reminiscent of the early to mid-1990s, the same environment that produced Timothy McVeigh whose 1995 truck bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City resulted in 168 dead and nearly 700 injured. To this day, it remains the deadliest act of domestic terrorism in U.S. history. Online comparisons of the FBI to Nazi Germany's gestapo, Adolf Hitler's secret police, merely serve to ratchet up tensions and encourage violent extremists to act. Several Republican politicians repeated the comparison, including Rep. Lauren Boebert (R-CO) and Florida Senator Rick Scott. Former Trump White House adviser, Steve Bannon, went even further, commenting, "I do not think it's beyond this administrative state and their deep state apparatus to actually try to work on the assassination of President Trump," in remarks to conspiracy theorist Alex Jones on his show last week. Continued violent rhetoric by politicians and the media, amplified by a far-right ecosystem rife with disinformation, is almost guaranteed to lead to future acts of extremist violence targeting U.S. government institutions and federal law enforcement agencies and their personnel.

[Return to Top](#)

Information From Online Communities and Unclassified Sources/InFOCUS is a situational awareness report published daily by the Washington State Fusion Center.

If you no longer wish to receive this report, please submit an email to intake@wsfc.wa.gov and enter UNSUBSCRIBE InFOCUS in the Subject line.

DISCLAIMER - the articles highlighted within InFOCUS is for informational purposes only and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Washington State Fusion Center, the City of Seattle, the Seattle Police Department or the Washington State Patrol and have been included only for ease of reference and academic purposes.

FAIR USE Notice All rights to these copyrighted items are reserved. Articles and graphics have been placed within for educational and discussion purposes only, in compliance with 'Fair Use' criteria established in Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976. The principle of 'Fair Use' was established as law by Section 107 of The Copyright Act of 1976. 'Fair Use' legally eliminates the need to obtain permission or pay royalties for the use of previously copyrighted materials if the purposes of display include 'criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, and research.' Section 107 establishes four criteria for determining whether the use of a work in any particular case qualifies as a 'fair use'. A work used does not necessarily have to satisfy all four criteria to qualify as an instance of 'fair use'. Rather, 'fair use' is determined by the overall extent to which the cited work does or does not substantially satisfy the criteria in their totality. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes of your own that go beyond 'fair use,' you must obtain permission from the copyright owner. For more information go to: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml>

THIS DOCUMENT MAY CONTAIN COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL. COPYING AND DISSEMINATION IS PROHIBITED WITHOUT PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNERS.

Source: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml>

[Return to Top](#)